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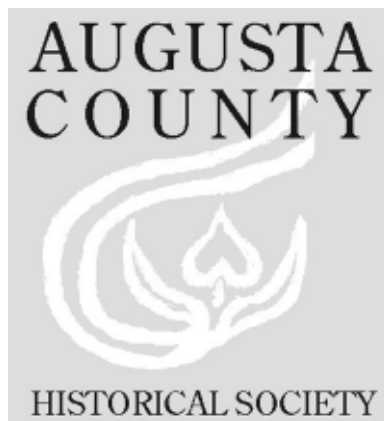


# Augusta Historical Bulletin

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## *Augusta Historical Bulletin*: Editorial Policy

The editors of the *Augusta Historical Bulletin* welcome submissions relating to any topic or period in the history of Augusta County, Virginia, and its wider environs. Submissions may take the form of articles, research notes, edited documents, or indexes to historical documents. Other formats might be acceptable but prospective authors of such submissions are encouraged to consult with a member of the editorial board. With rare exceptions, the *Bulletin* does not publish manuscripts that focus exclusively on genealogical matters. Authors should strive to make their contributions accessible to a broad readership. In matters of form and style, authors should adhere to the guidelines and strictures set forth in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed., or Kate L. Turabian, et al., *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., both of which are widely available in libraries and bookstores. A style sheet, prepared by the editors of the *Bulletin*, is available upon request. Authors should submit four double-spaced copies of their manuscripts, with endnotes where applicable, and include photocopies of any illustrations. Upon acceptance of the manuscript for publication, authors must provide an electronic copy of it, as well as publishable-quality illustrations.



**Manuscripts or requests for style sheets should be sent to: The Augusta County Historical Society, Attention: Bulletin Editors, P.O. Box 686, Staunton, Virginia 24402-0686. Please try to submit proposed manuscripts by June 1, 2008. Queries may also be sent to: Nancy Sorrells ([lotswife@comcast.net](mailto:lotswife@comcast.net)) or Katharine Brown ([klbrown@cfw.com](mailto:klbrown@cfw.com)).**





# Treasures under foot

## Henry C. Mercer's Moravian tiles in Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County

### by Dr. Kenneth W. Keller

*Dr. Keller, the head of Mary Baldwin College's History Department, presented this paper at the historical society's spring of 2006 meeting. Bethany-Trinity Lutheran in Waynesboro was the site of the program.*

The upper Shenandoah Valley has a diverse and extensive collection of buildings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Residents remember the eclectic architectural work of T. J. Collins and other architects with pride, historic preservation of nineteenth century buildings flourishes, and the town of Staunton has celebrated the character of the Victorian era with an annual festival. In these commemorations, some aspects of the culture of the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth century have been overlooked, and at least one of them is the design of the Arts and Crafts Movement of the period.<sup>1</sup>

One expression of the Arts and Crafts movement was the historic experiments with design and handicraft by Henry Chapman Mercer (1856-1930) of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, whose ceramic tiles and their designs won international regard as well as local patronage in the upper Shenandoah Valley. Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County may well have the best collection of Henry Mercer's tiles from the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, in the entire South; the surviving job files from Mercer's Moravian Pottery certainly seem to indicate so. These Arts and Crafts artifacts' presence in the upper Shenandoah Valley tells us much about the cultural roots of the region as well as its connections with national cultural trends.

The Arts and Crafts Movement, from which the tiles of Henry Mercer stem, began in England shortly after the American Civil War and reached its peak from the 1880s to 1910.<sup>2</sup> In 1897, American exponents of the movement organized the Arts and Crafts Society;



which became the arbiter of Arts and Crafts style in American art and architecture.<sup>3</sup> Although art historians say the movement ended in England about 1916, it lasted in the United States until the 1920s and the Great Depression. It was a reaction against industrialism, the domination of culture by the machine, and the standardization of the production of goods.

Advocates of Arts and Crafts emphasized handicrafts and the making by a single artisan of one object from beginning to end without dependence on the assembly line. Arts and Crafts artists used natural material such as stone, wood, or clay, preferred designs that were asymmetric and repeated, and derived their creations from the material environment of the countryside and the rural cottage, not the city and the factory. From the Arts and Crafts Movement emerged the Mission Style and Stickley furniture, Rookwood Pottery, objects of Elbert Hubbard's Roycroft Guild, the Prairie School buildings of early Frank Lloyd Wright, Tiffany windows, medieval revival stained glass of Charles J. Connick, and the Craftsman Style of house. Many of its products are well-known in the upper Shenandoah Valley, such as the Tiffany windows in Trinity Episcopal Church in Staunton and the Craftsman style homes of Staunton's older hillside neighborhoods and the Tree Streets of Waynesboro, but the Arts and Crafts tiles of Henry Mercer here have received relatively little attention.

Henry Chapman Mercer founded the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works of Doylestown in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, in 1898, and oversaw its operations until his death in 1930. After he died, family members and devotees continued its operations until 1964, when it closed. Mercer's ancestors included members of Virginia's Byrd, Harrison, and Mason families. Having been graduated from Harvard and receiving graduate degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, Mercer became a student of archaeology and anthropology. He was also a confirmed bachelor, a lover of Chesapeake retrievers, a bicycle enthusiast who refused to drive an automobile, a world traveler, wildlife conservationist, and an Episcopal vestryman. Mercer's studies of anthropology led him to accept a position as curator of the renowned University of Pennsylvania Museum's Collection of American and Pre-historic Archaeology between 1894 and 1897. Following the dominant trends of archaeology and anthropology of his time, at first he was devoted to the study of ancient artifacts that had origi-





nated outside the Western Hemisphere, but his roots in southeastern Pennsylvania and travels in Europe soon led him down a different path. Mercer tired of studying ancient artifacts from other civilizations, and became convinced that the tools and artifacts of rural America were just as important as the antiquities of the ancient Near East. His interest in anthropology led him to develop an extensive system of classification of the tools of daily life, and he became particularly fascinated with the designs the Pennsylvania Germans used in rustic communities around his home, especially five-plate stoves with Bible and legendary scenes cast into the iron. Having inherited a fortune, Mercer was able to indulge his tastes by acquiring over 600 Pennsylvania stoveplates with a variety of decorative themes.<sup>4</sup>

Mercer's interest in the stoveplate designs also led him in other directions: he became fascinated with the ceramic arts and the hand-made pre-industrial tools of rural America. Observing the abundance of tool types and ceramic artifacts among the neighboring Pennsylvania Germans, Mercer began to study ceramics and experiment with the native red clays of Bucks County and gray clays of neighboring New Jersey in making his own tiles. He kept detailed records of his attempts to perfect a modern artistic ceramic material and developed specialized slips, glazes, firing techniques, and over sixty-three separate colors for his tiles.<sup>5</sup>

Once Mercer had developed the skills necessary for producing his own tiles, he established the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, naming his ceramic operations after the Young Men's Missionary Society of the Moravian Church in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where Mercer found many of his stoveplates. His extensive travels in Europe led him to collections of medieval and Renaissance tiles in the British Museum, the Germanic Museum in Nuremberg, the Hôtel de Cluny in Paris, as well as other collections of tile designs from sixteen European abbeys and churches. Eventually he displayed his tiles at the St. Louis World's Fair, where he won a grand prize, and other artistic competitions, and his works became well known.<sup>6</sup>

Mercer became famous as the most honored maker of "artistic" tiles in America. Architects installed them in such prominent locales as the 1903 Pennsylvania State Capitol, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Art Institute of Chicago, Grand Central Station in New York, Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood, Atlantic City hotels, the



Washington Zoo, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, the Rockefeller estate at Pocantico Hills, New York, and the Chapel and other buildings of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. The tiles went to installations in England,

France, Canada, Egypt, and Cuba, and many university buildings, public and private schools, libraries, houses of worship, hotels, corporate headquarters, courthouses, country clubs, banks, and armories.<sup>7</sup>

Mercer's preoccupation with other artifacts of rural America led him to collect a large collection of tools and between 1914 and 1916 to construct innovative buildings in which to store and display them.<sup>8</sup> He became an advocate of the use of reinforced concrete as a building material, and constructed several large castle-like buildings on his estate in Doylestown to demonstrate his enthusiasm for the material. Building a whimsical museum to house his huge collection of tools, between 1908 and 1912 he also erected an equally unusual towering mansion for his residence. Calling the mansion "Fonthill," he named his home after the house of a Virginia relative and was rumored to have derived its design from a similarly named and built structure that the Marquis of Beckford, an eccentric English aristocrat, had built as a towering country house around 1805. Mercer denied the association with Beckford, whose house collapsed.<sup>9</sup> Mercer's building had forty-four rooms, ten bathrooms, five bedrooms, thirty-two stairwells, two hundred windows, eleven entrances, eighteen fireplaces, many arches and heavy woodwork, iron hardware, twenty-one chimneys, steam heat, and even an Otis elevator. Inside he placed more than 1,500 foreign tiles, in-



*Mercer tile works*



*Fonthill*



cluding thirty-three Babylonian clay tablets. Mercer decorated the exterior with tiles crafted in his Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, for which he constructed another building between 1910 and



*Mercer Museum*

1912 to create and display his tiles for leading architects and other exponents of the Arts and Crafts style.<sup>10</sup>

In Virginia, Mercer's ceramic gems found their way to architectural commissions in Alexandria, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, Petersburg, Plains, Richmond, and Roanoke.<sup>11</sup> An examination of a detailed listing of the surviving job files of Mercer tile installations reveals that Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County probably have the largest installation of Moravian tiles in the entire American South.<sup>12</sup> The variety of designs in these multiple installations in the upper Shenandoah Valley shows an appreciation of Arts and Crafts ceramic decorative arts that is certainly unequalled anywhere else in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Mercer tiles came to the Upper Valley both early and late in the years 1902 to 1930, when Henry Mercer supervised the production of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works. In 1901 Mercer got his first significant order from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. The first installations in Virginia occurred in Norfolk in 1911 and at the Dooley Mansion at Swannanoa in Augusta County and at the Lynchburg Hotel in 1912. The builders of the water tower at Swannanoa installed a frieze of decorative tiles at the top of the structure, thus making the tower, which was designed by the Richmond architectural firm of Noland and Baskerville, the first site in the upper Valley with a Mercer tile installation. The remaining dozen or so sites in Staunton and Waynesboro did not receive tile installations until long after the Arts and Crafts Movement had peaked. T. J. Collins



*Swannanoa*

architect Sam Collins, who had succeeded T. J. Collins after his father's stroke and retirement in 1911, was responsible for bringing the tiles to at least a dozen sites in Staunton.

The earliest Staunton site of an installation was the Temple House of Israel, designed by Sam Collins and erected in 1925. Exte-

rior Mercer tiles over the entrance arch were incised with the Mogen David (Shield or Star of David), and at the top of the gable was a bunch of grapes, referring to the story in the book of Numbers in



*Menorah and Star of David from the Temple House of Israel in Staunton*

which Joshua's men return from Canaan with grapes and pomegranates as a sign of the Promised Land's abundance. Mercer had originally proposed a sheaf of wheat for the arch, but the design was changed.

Inside the Temple, Collins used a Mercer tile menorah on the raised platform or *bimah* before the Ark where the Torah scrolls are kept. The menorah is probably taken from a relief of the sacking of Jerusa-



*Waynesboro's Bethany-Trinity Lutheran Church*



*Jesus Christ the Victor tile*

lem by the Romans found on the Arch of Titus. The Temple House of Israel was the only synagogue to receive Mercer tiles, according to the job files for the Moravian Pottery.<sup>13</sup>

The next local structure for Mercer Tiles was another house of worship, Waynesboro's Bethany-Trinity Lutheran Church, a congregation of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Sam Collins designed the church, which was built

in 1925. Called at the time of construction Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church, it contains the best preserved collection of interior tiles in a public building to be found locally. The tiles are in the floor of the chancel. They include six tiles of Mercer's series on the seven Christian Virtues—Prudentia, Fortitudo, Justitia, Temperantia, Spes, and Caritas. Several Christ monograms appear, including the traditional Greek "Jesus Christ the Victor" design (IC XC NI KA surrounding a cross) and a resurrection symbol of the peacock. One chancel tile features a line from the 46<sup>th</sup> Psalm in Latin: the English translation is "There is a stream whereof make glad the city of God." Appropriately for the house of worship in which the tile is installed, Martin Luther used the 46<sup>th</sup> Psalm as the source of his rousing hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." Other tiles include one with a pair of birds taken from a Tintern Abbey design with the words "*Non omnis sed bona et bene*"—(Not for all but well and good)—a theme that Arts and Crafts artisans would happily endorse.<sup>14</sup>

As the prosperity of the 1920s encouraged some Staunton residents to build imposing houses, Sam Collins designed several private residences with fireplaces bordered by Mercer tiles. The E. Russell Cover house at 39 Edgewood Road, later the house of the President of Mary Baldwin College, had tiles featuring workers engaged in various handicrafts as did the



*E. Russell Cover House*





*Top tiles feature the Zodiac, bottom tile features a blacksmith*

Michael Kivlighan house, at the southwest corner of New and Academy Streets, and the colonial revival John L. Goodloe residence at 25 Ridgeview Road. "Shenstone," the house of Captain W. H. Steele, an instructor on the faculty of the Staunton Military Academy, was richly decorated with Mercer tiles over the front entrance and well as on two interior fireplaces. One fireplace featured the signs of the Zodiac and another fireplace had the series of workers engaged in handicrafts. The General E. Walton Opie house, a Spanish revival structure on North Coalter Street opposite Kable Street, has a fireplace decorated with a variety of themes ranging from skates, to insects, to a rabbit.<sup>15</sup>

Owners of these houses

had their tiles installed in 1927, while in 1928 a North Augusta Street house built by Joseph Poole Allen, a local furniture dealer and funeral director, had a living room fireplace with the Zodiac series built. Architect Sam Collins did not rigidly adhere to the Arts and Crafts style of house for which the tiles were designed; the Staunton houses show an eclecticism of design of both the patrons and the architect himself.

Even after the Great Stock Market Crash of 1929 took place,



*Shenstone's Zodiac fireplace*

people of the upper Shenandoah Valley continued to use Mercer tiles. The 1908 Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church in nearby Harrisonburg, remodeled by the Collins firm in 1929, had Mercer tiles placed on the floor of the chancel and chancel steps. These objects displayed familiar ecclesiastical symbols like the

fleur-de-lys, the Maltese Cross, and designs from a Norfolk, England, fourteenth century monastery called Castle Acre that Mercer had found. There were also tiles in Blessed Sacrament like those in Waynesboro's Bethany-Trinity church.<sup>16</sup> Some of the tiles at Blessed Sacrament Church are covered today with chancel furniture and the transformation of the original chancel into a small chapel in



*The front entrance of Capt. Steele's house was adorned with Mercer tiles.*

1995 has led to the building of a wooden partition over some of the tiles. The Dr. S. Godfrey Henkel family of Staunton bought and moved the William Kinney house on Beverley Street in Staunton in 1929 to a site on North Augusta Street; Sam Collins



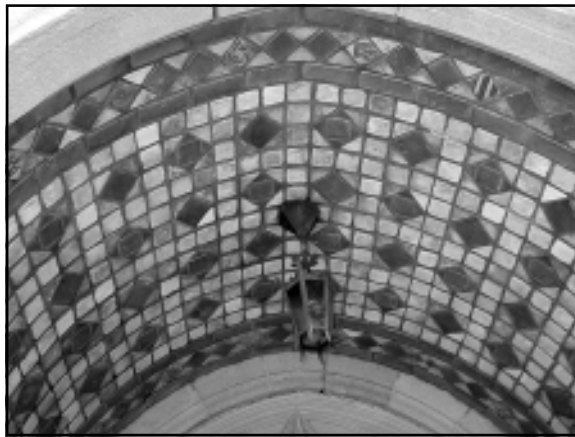
*Gen. Opie's house on North Coalter*



*Michael Kivlighan House*



*Emmanuel Episcopal Church Parish House*



*Mercer tile arch in Emmanuel*

went to work to place Mercer tiles a-round fire-places in the living room, dining room, several bedrooms and den of the house, now r e n a m e d "Edgehill." One of the tile series added was a group of panels from the folk song "The Arkansas Traveler." "Edgehill" also received Mercer tiles of grapes, dolphins, cherries, an apple, a tortoise, a pear, tobacco, a cricket, a tinder box, bellows, candles, "Priscilla," and the signs of the

Zodiac.<sup>17</sup> Emmanuel Episcopal Church Parish House went up in 1930, and Collins decorated the entrance archway to the building with tiles taken from sketches of designs used in European monasteries and churches. The arch at Emmanuel's parish house included a quatrefoil from Jervaulx Abbey in Yorkshire, the fleur-de-lys, a wheel and dragon from Castle Acre, the Wheel of Bayeux, stylized flowers, and chequer and stripe patterns from the Hôtel de Cluny, a museum of medieval art in Paris.<sup>18</sup>

Staunton's most varied and ambitious installation went into the remodeling of the Opera House into the Staunton City Hall, which is





*Staunton City Courts Building, exterior*



*Staunton City Courts Building, interior*

now the Staunton City Courts Building, in 1930, the year of the last known installations of Mercer tiles in the city. The main entrance hall, lattice borders along the wall, the risers of the front vestibule steps, and the small corridor before the west staircase had a wild variety of tiles. The one hundred or more decorative tiles in the main corridor floor included a menagerie of animals with a rhinoceros, cat, turtle, rabbit, a dove, sea monsters, a griffin, an eagle, a chanticleer, and a fly, tiles featuring characters from the Canterbury Tales such as the Merchant and the Wife of Bath, others with images of figures like "The Puritan" and an Ameri-



*The fly tile*



*The Wife of Bath tile*



can Indian from American colonial history, the Psalm 46 tile with a swan and tower, figures of the Zodiac constellations of Scorpio and Gemini, square-rigged ships, an image of a barrister, a woman spinning yarn, a man with a sickle cutting wheat, a theatrical mask, and a medieval village.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately some of the tiles are coated with grime and much worn because of the wear from feet the hall receives, but there are still many of them with clear designs in which the color of the original Mercer tiles continues to show.

The year 1930 not only marked a downturn in American prosperity, but also the end of Henry Mercer's direction of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works. Henry Mercer died at the age of 73 on March 9 of that year, and although the Pottery continued to produce tiles using his molds, slips, and glazes, the enthusiasm and creativity he brought to the enterprise was gone. Not only did Mercer's inspirations end, but also the onset of the Great Depression meant a slump in building in both public buildings and private homes. Sam Collins was touched by Mercer's death. He wrote to Mercer's family about his respect for Mercer and his achievements and his wish to have a wreath placed on Mercer's grave to honor his work.<sup>20</sup> Clearly by 1930, Mercer had an international reputation as a designer of the first rank. The Arts and Crafts Society named Mercer a "master" in 1902, and the American Institute of Architects gave him a gold medal for achievement in Allied Arts.<sup>21</sup> To the end Mercer continued to preach the values of the Arts and Crafts Movement, even when streamlining, technology worship, and war began to distract the public from the goals of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Mercer warned about addiction to standardization and mass production: "Machinery can't make art," he said, "Art needs the touch of the human hand, its failings as well as its skill."<sup>22</sup>

Mercer's Pottery closed in 1964, but eventually a revived interest in handicraft led in 1967 to a reopening of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works by the Bucks County Parks Department. Reproductions of his tiles are now sold on the internet, there is significant enthusiasm for the craftsmanship of the movement he enthusiastically spoke for, and articles about his work have appeared in serious scholarly journals and popular magazines like the *Smithsonian* magazine. The Mercer museum in Doylestown and nearby Fonthill and the Pottery attract busloads of amazed visitors and university presses



are now publishing monographs about his work, attention that it certainly deserves.

What do the tiles tell us about the place where we live? First of all, the records of the tiles may have much more to tell us about our buildings. Not all the tiles that Sam Collins used may be listed in the job files of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, although the collection of files is extensive (and now on microfilm). Homeowners and historic preservationists interested in the history of the buildings this essay mentions may find many more details about their design in these records in Doylestown. In addition, the fact that the tiles came from Pennsylvania, along the northern terminus of the Great Wagon Road, shows that at least some cultural contact between the Keystone State and "Greater Pennsylvania," which some scholars call the Great Valley, continued well into the twentieth century. During the eighteenth century, many Pennsylvania Germans traveled up the Shenandoah Valley to settle in communities still populated by their descendants; the Mercer tiles brought a folk style mostly inspired by the Pennsylvania Germans to the same locale. The condition of the tiles in various places in our area, some in good shape and others damaged, shows that although people had enough good taste to bring these Arts and Crafts treasures to the upper Valley at one time, recently, especially in some public buildings, they are not well regarded. Recent sale prices for Mercer tiles in antique markets reveal they may be sold for hundreds of dollars. These tiles are well worth saving, especially in communities known for their dedication to historic preservation and the appreciation of Victorian architecture. Finally, the slowness with which the upper Valley adopted the tiles may give us cause for hope; the cultural conservatism of the area may encourage us to take a new look at these treasures under foot and save them and the many stories they tell for future generations.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Thanks to Bill and Betsy Pollard, the Frank family, Sarah O'Connor, the Kelly family, Linda Hanna, Rabbi Joe Blair of Temple House of Israel, the Rev. Ed Covert of Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Sergei Troubetzkuoy, Fitzhugh Elder, Elaine McCarrick, Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church, and Bethany/Trinity Lutheran Church.

<sup>2</sup>Clay Lancaster, *The American Bungalow—1880-1930* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995); Robin Langley and David Rago, eds. *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (Glasgow, Scotland: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003); Douglas Congdon Martin, *Arts and Crafts: The California Home* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1998); Gustav Stickley, ed. *Craftsman Bungalows—59 Homes from The Craftsman* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1988); Gustav Stickley, *Craftsman Homes—Architecture and Furnishings of the American*



*Arts and Crafts Movement* (New York: Dover Publications, 1979).

<sup>3</sup>The best single work on Mercer is Cleota Reed, *Henry Chapman Mercer and the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987). On the organization of the Arts and Crafts Society, see Reed, 30.

<sup>4</sup>See Reed and Steven Conn, "Henry Chapman Mercer and the Search for American History," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 106 (July 1992): 325-355; Linda E. Dyke, *Henry Chapman Mercer—An Annotated Chronology* (Doylestown, PA: The Bucks County Historical Society, 1996); Donald Dale Jackson, "Henry Mercer makes more sense as time goes on," *The Smithsonian Magazine* 19 (October 1988): 111-118.

<sup>5</sup>Reed, 231-235.

<sup>6</sup>*Moravian Tiles—A Reprint of the 1913 Sales Catalogue of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works* (Doylestown, PA, 1999).

<sup>7</sup>A listing of all the surviving job files of the Pottery, giving locations, dates of installation, job numbers, and number of corresponding reels of microfilm is available in Terry A. McNealy, *Guide to the Papers of Henry C. Mercer and the Records of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works* (Doylestown, PA: The Bucks County Historical Society, 1985). The Bucks County Historical Society does not lend the microfilm, but it may be used on the premises of its Spruance Library at the site of the Mercer Museum. It will make copies of the papers in the job files recording each installation for a fee. On the extensive collection of tiles in the Pennsylvania State Capitol, see Paul Clymer, et al. *Guide Book to the Tiled Pavement in the Pennsylvania Capitol* (Harrisburg, PA: Capital Preservation Committee, no date). There are at least 400 separate Mercer tile mosaics in the Pennsylvania State Capitol.

<sup>8</sup>On Mercer's tool collection, which amounted to over 25,000 artifacts, and his system of classifying these objects, see Marilyn Arbor, *Tools and Trades of America's Past—The Mercer Museum Collection* (Doylestown, PA: The Mercer Museum of the Bucks County Historical Society, 1994).

<sup>9</sup>Reed, 19.

<sup>10</sup>Helen Hartman Gemmill, *The Mercer Mile—The Story of Henry Chapman Mercer and His Three Concrete Buildings* (Doylestown, PA: The Bucks County Historical Society, 1987).

<sup>11</sup>According to McNealy's guide, all the installations in Virginia were in private residences except for ones in the Lynchburg Hotel, St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Petersburg, Christ Church in Alexandria, Grace Methodist Church in Plains, and Christ Episcopal Church in Roanoke.

<sup>12</sup>The locations of the tiles may be traced in McNealy. There may be Mercer tiles in other locations in Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County. The sites discussed here are the ones specifically listed in the job files.

<sup>13</sup>Letter of T. J. Collins and Son to the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 23 March-22 June 1925, Job File 1925-51, Series 1—Correspondence and small plans and drawings, Record Group 2, Records of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, Papers of Henry Mercer, Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, PA. The stained glass windows in Temple House of Israel are from the Charles J. Connick studios. They contain images of plants mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures. My thanks to Sergei Troubetzkouy who pointed out this detail to me. The Moravian Pottery refers to Temple House of Israel as "Temple House of Synagogue." One other Mercer commission was for a rabbi's study, but not for a sanctuary.

<sup>14</sup>T.J. Collins and Son to Henry Mercer, 10 March-25 May 1925, Job File 1925-58, Series 1—Correspondence and small plans and drawings, Record Group 2, Records of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, Papers of Henry Mercer, Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, PA.

<sup>15</sup>T.J. Collins and Son to the Moravian Pottery and tile Works, 4 August 1927, Job File 1927-23, , Series 1—Correspondence and small plans and drawings, Record Group 2, Records of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, Papers of Henry Mercer, Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, PA

<sup>16</sup>T. J. Collins and Son to the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 12 April 1929-18 June 1929, Job File 1929-14, Series 1—Correspondence and small plans and drawings, Record Group 2, Records of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, Papers of Henry Mercer, Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, PA.

<sup>17</sup>Samuel J. Collins to the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 12 March 1930, Job File 1930-10, Series 1—Correspondence and small plans and drawings, Record Group 2, Records of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, Papers of Henry Mercer, Bucks County Historical



Society, Doylestown, PA. See also "Then and Now," and Charles Culbertson, "Downtown mansion saved, brick by brick," *Staunton News-Leader* 3 June 2006.

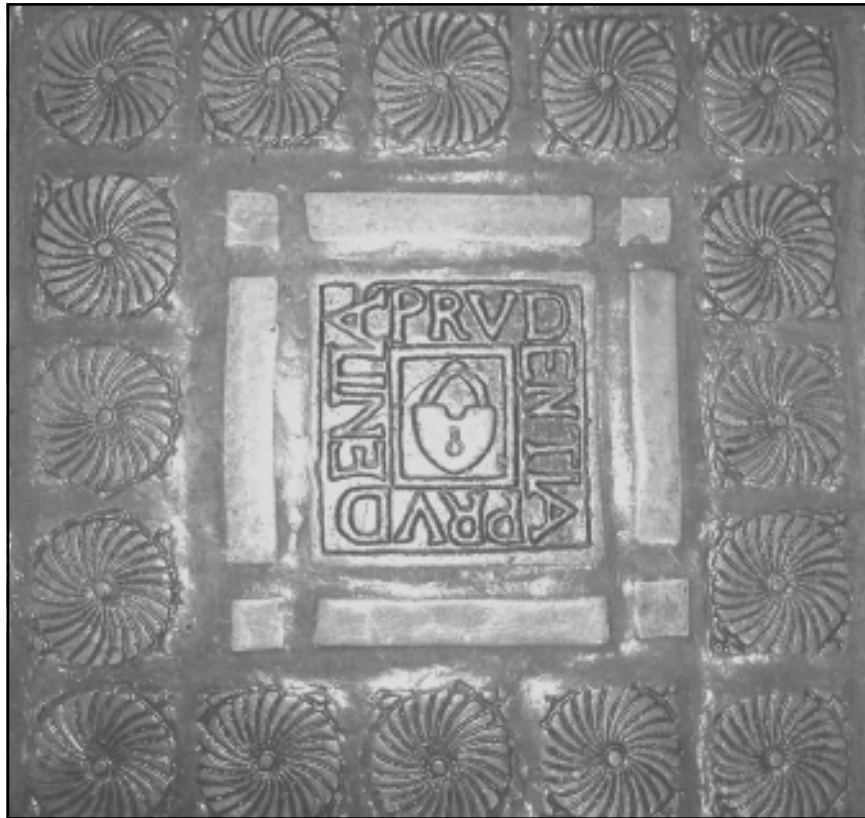
<sup>18</sup>The sources for the Emmanuel Parish House arch designs can be traced in Reed and the 1913 *Sales Catalogue*.

<sup>19</sup>T. J. Collins and Son to the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 26 August-30 December 1930, 2-6 January 1931, Job File 1930-22, Series 1—Correspondence and small plans and drawings, Record Group 2, Records of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, Papers of Henry Mercer, Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, PA.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>Reed, xviii-xix.

<sup>22</sup>1913 *Sales Catalogue*, unpagued.



*Tile from Bethany-Trinity Lutheran Church*



# "Inhabitant with good people" The early residents of Virginia

by Nancy Egloff  
Jamestown Foundation Historian

*As the nation prepared to celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding in May of 2007, all eyes were focused on Jamestown, Virginia. At the Augusta County Historical Society banquet on Tuesday, April 24, 2007, a little bit of that Jamestown story was presented by Jamestown historian Nancy Egloff. A historian at the Jamestown Settlement for the past twenty years, Egloff helps to develop the exhibits and educational programs at the site as well as answer queries on Jamestown history, and support research projects in various media that recently have been or are being developed for the 2007 commemoration. She was deeply involved in developing the multi-million dollar interactive exhibit gallery recently opened at Jamestown. The commemoration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary was carried out in different ways across the state as each area celebrated its own unique heritage and history that occurred because of that initial 1607 settlement. The Augusta County Historical Society has been a part of that 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary planning through its participation in the Augusta-Jamestown 2007 Committee.*

Marshal of Virginia Sir Thomas Dale in 1613 wrote: "I have seen the best countries in Europe; I protest unto you before the Living God, put them all together, this country will be equivalent unto them if it be inhabitant with good people."<sup>1</sup> Virginia would eventually become "inhabitant" with a variety of people who, through their interactions, formed a culture quite diverse in composition.

## **Native Cultures of North America**

The first people to arrive in Virginia came as early as 16,000 years ago, according to archaeologists. By the time of English settlement in 1607, the original people in coastal Virginia were organized into thirty-two tribes under the leadership of Wahunsonacock, known as Powhatan, the paramount or supreme chief. The population of





*Powhatan Indian village, Jamestown Settlement history museum, Williamsburg, Virginia (Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation).*

these tribes totaled about 14,000 men, women and children. Although they lived in separate tribes and towns led by their own chiefs, the Powhatan people shared a language, social structure, religious beliefs and cultural traditions.<sup>2</sup>

These Algonquian-speaking people lived in a ranked society of rulers, great warriors, priests and commoners. The status of chiefs was determined by inheritance and that of hunters and warriors by achievement. Higher status Powhatan people had larger homes and more elaborate clothing. They controlled luxury trade goods such as copper, shell beads, fresh-water pearls and furs.

Horticulture provided the people's main source of food. Women and children cultivated crops of corn, beans, squash and sunflowers and gathered fruits, nuts, grains and roots. Women made pottery from local clays for cooking and storage. They fashioned clothing from deer hides and wove mats from marsh reeds to cover houses and beds. Men hunted the whitetail deer and other animals. They fished the rivers and Chesapeake Bay from canoes or waded in shallow water, and fashioned tools and weapons made from wood, bone, shell and stone. The men made fish nets, fish traps and canoes.

The people built houses by bending young saplings to form a frame and covering them with bark shingles or with woven mats. Houses contained a single room with sleeping benches built along



*Man making a stone tool, Powhatan Indian village, Jamestown Settlement history museum, Williamsburg, Virginia (Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation).*

the walls and a central fire. Because of the poor light, however, women usually cooked outside.

Leisure activities brought Powhatan people together with games, music and dancing. Everyone played a ball game similar to soccer and a gambling game with reeds. People danced in circles accompanied by gourd and turtle shell rattles, wooden drums covered with skins, and reed flutes.

Although numerous Powhatan people are named in the original records of the Virginia colony, three are perhaps most well-

known.<sup>3</sup> Captain John Smith wrote in 1612, "The chiefe ruler is called Powhatan . . . a tall well proportioned man, with a sower looke, his head somewhat gray, his beard so thinne that it seemeth none at al, his age neare 60; of a very able and hardy body to endure any labour."<sup>4</sup>

Wahunsonacock rose to power in the last quarter of the sixteenth century when he inherited six tribes through his mother's lineage and began consolidating about twenty-five others through warfare and intimidation. The English crowned him ruler of Virginia, but at the same time a subject of King James I. John Smith met with the chief several times and noted his dignity and defiance. Powhatan died in 1618 and was succeeded by his brother, Opechancanough.

Opechancanough was one of Powhatan's younger brothers and served as one of the chiefs of the powerful Pamunkey tribe. In De-





cember 1607 the “chiefe Captaine” captured John Smith and led him to Powhatan’s main village, Werowocomoco, on the York River. There Opechancanough was forced to accept Powhatan’s peaceful policy towards the English. But as the English population in Virginia grew, Opechancanough quietly strengthened the tribes and gained power for himself. In the next few years he lulled the colonists into complacency, then attacked in March 1622, eliminating almost one-third of the English. After a decade of war, a decade of peace followed. In 1644, Opechancanough, still alive, attacked the colonists again. This time, however, the English far outnumbered the Powhatans and the Indians were defeated. Opechancanough, now a very old man, was captured and killed at Jamestown in 1646.



*Woman making clay pottery, Powhatan Indian village, Jamestown Settlement history museum, Williamsburg, Virginia (Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation).*

In 1612 colonist William Strachey wrote: “Powhatan called a young daughter of his, whome he loved well Pochahuntas.”<sup>5</sup> Pocahontas was born about 1596, the daughter of the supreme chief and an unknown mother. She was one of her father’s favorite children and was on the scene, according to John Smith, when he was captured and brought before Powhatan in December 1607. Smith wrote that she rescued him from death, but some historians speculate that he was part of a test Powhatan used to assert his authority over the English in Virginia. Pocahontas then periodically accompa-



nied Indian emissaries to Jamestown with food, where she would “gett the boyes forth with her into the markett place and make them wheele [cartwheel].”<sup>6</sup> After John Smith left Virginia in Fall 1609, Pocahontas was not seen by the English for a number of years.

### English Interests in North America

English interest in North America developed because of needs at home, in particular raw materials such as wood and wood products. The English also sought an opportunity to locate a western route to the riches of the Orient, a mode of stimulating the economy by making goods that could be sold at home, and a way to convert the Indians of North America and spread a more protestant form of Chris-



*Ship **Godspeed**, captained by Bartholomew Gosnold, Jamestown Settlement history museum, Williamsburg, Virginia (Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation).*



tianity (as opposed to Roman Catholicism). Sir Walter Raleigh had funded a number of voyages to Virginia in the 1580s, giving the English prior experience at attempting settlements on the Atlantic Coast.

By 1606 a small group of well-to-do merchants and others pooled their finances and asked King James I for a charter to explore and plant colonies in North America. The resulting Virginia Company had two branches—one based in London and the other in Plymouth. The two groups raised money, recruited men and boys, bought supplies and procured ships. They wrote instructions for the organization and chose leaders. By December 1606 the London group was ready to send its first settlers to the Americas.

The company's three ships set sail on December 20, 1606.<sup>7</sup> They took a southwesterly course to the Canary Islands and across the Atlantic Ocean to the Caribbean, where they made a number of stops for fresh water and provisions. One man, Edward Brookes, died on the West Indies island of Mona from heat stroke. By April 1607, they headed north towards Chesapeake Bay, arriving on April 26. When the landing party went ashore, a number of Indians attacked, establishing a wary relationship between the two groups.

### Leaders of the English Expedition

That same night the English opened a box that held the names of the seven men who were to serve on the colony's governing council. This list included a number of well-placed individuals from prominent families in England . . . and Captain John Smith.<sup>8</sup>

The group of seven councilors selected Edward Maria Wingfield to be their first president. A member of a distinguished family, Wingfield was a veteran of wars fought by the English in Ireland and the Netherlands. He was also the only one of the original 1606 patentees (financial contributors) to go to Virginia. However, the other councilors removed him from office after only a few months due to charges of misconduct. Wingfield was imprisoned and sent back to England in Spring 1608.

The three ships' captains also served on the first council. Christopher Newport, captain of the *Susan Constant*, was in charge of the expedition while at sea. He had been active as a privateer in the 1590s, attacking Spanish ships laden with gold in the West Indies. He served the Virginia Company for five years, making a total of five



*Captain John Smith, after the original, probably by Simon van de Passe, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation.*

voyages to the colony. In 1612 he began sailing for the East India Company and died in Indonesia in 1616.

The captain of the ship *Godspeed* was Bartholomew Gosnold, who was well-connected in England. Gosnold had led an expedition to Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard in 1602, naming numerous places there. Although a major promoter of the Virginia colony, he died on August 22, 1607, only four months after arrival.

John Ratcliffe captained the smallest ship, *Discovery*. Ratcliffe was chosen president of the council when Wingfield was removed from office in September 1607. He himself was then deposed in 1608 and replaced with Captain John Smith. Indians killed him in 1609-10 when he aggressively tried to obtain food from them.

Other council members included Captain John Martin and Captain George Kendall. Martin was the son of Sir Richard Martin, Master of the Mint and Lord Mayor of London. John Martin patented land at Martin's Brandon. He lived in Virginia for about twenty years, one of the last surviving original colonists. Little is known about George Kendall. He caused a great deal of dissension in the colony's early days and was the first Englishman to be executed in Virginia, in Fall 1607, for a "mutiny."

Captain John Smith was the only one of the first seven councilors who was not a gentleman. He was a yeoman, born in 1580. Eager for adventure, his early travels took him to wars and experiences throughout Europe and the Mediterranean area. He volunteered to join the Virginia Company in 1606, and in September 1608, was pro-



moted to president of the council. Smith explored Virginia, and recorded and mapped his observations. He proved to be a skilled trader with the Powhatan Indians, strengthened defenses and enforced discipline. When injured by a gunpowder explosion in the fall of 1609, he was forced to return to England where he remained, except for a brief trip to New England. Through his writings Smith promoted the colonies, never married, and died in 1631. He thought of himself as the “parent” of colonies: “I may call [the colonies] my children for they have bin my wife, my hawks, my hounds, my cards, my dice, and in total my best content” (1622).<sup>9</sup>

### The First English Settlement

The first settlers comprised 101 men and four boys. Most came from the city of London, others from the greater London area, including Kent, Sussex and Essex counties, and a few from Lincolnshire and East Anglia. They ranged in age from teenaged through their



*Blacksmiths at Jamestown repair tools and weapons at the re-created James Fort, Jamestown Settlement history museum, Williamsburg, Virginia (Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation).*

early fifties. They were about half gentlemen, four carpenters and other tradesmen useful in building a colony (including one barber, one tailor, one drummer, two surgeons, one blacksmith, one mason, and two bricklayers), twelve laborers, four boys, and a few soldiers.<sup>10</sup>

After selecting a settlement site, the colonists began to build James Fort—triangular with three public buildings and three rows of wattle and daub houses. Within a few months, President Wingfield was accused of hoarding supplies and was replaced with



*Soldiers firing muskets outside re-created James Fort, Jamestown Settlement history museum, Williamsburg, Virginia (Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation).*

John Ratcliffe. Then the loss of life began. By January 1608, only 38 of the original 104 settlers were still alive. That same month, Captain Newport returned to Jamestown with more settlers, the “First Supply” that totaled 120. This group also included a majority of gentlemen, but had a sizable number of laborers and tradesmen: a jeweler, two gold refiners, two goldsmiths, a gunner, a perfumer, six tailors, a physician, three apothecaries, a cooper, a tobacco-pipe maker and a blacksmith.<sup>11</sup>

That summer, John Smith set out to explore Chesapeake Bay, while the skilled workers at Jamestown tried to establish a number of “industries” that they hoped would make money for the Virginia Company investors. The company hoped that the gold workers, the jeweler and the perfumer could find products useful to their trades. Around October 1608, the seventy members of the “Second Supply” arrived with Captain Newport. This group of additional colonists consisted of about half gentlemen, one-fourth laborers, and one-fourth tradesmen, with no specific trades listed. Along with these English men, there were two boys, two women, and eight “Dutchmen and Poles.”<sup>12</sup>

The “Dutchmen and Poles” represent the first of the foreigners sent by the Virginia Company with special skills to run certain in-





dustries. The “Dutchmen” were Germans with glass blowing experience and carpentry skills. The company officials thought that with Virginia’s abundance of wood and sand, a glass industry may be profitable. The Poles had wood extractive skills to make pitch, tar and potash. In subsequent years the company sent Frenchmen to establish vineyards for a wine industry and to raise silkworms for silk production. Italians came a few years later to set up a glass bead factory.

This October Supply also included the first two English women in Virginia, Mistress Forest and her maid, Anne Burras. Mistress Forest probably accompanied Thomas Forest, a gentleman on the same voyage who may have been her husband. Soon after their arrival Anne, the maid, married John Laydon, a laborer. They eventually had four daughters, and still



lived in Virginia in the 1630s.<sup>13</sup>

By late 1608 about 300 people had been transported to Virginia on the first three voyages. But the significantly high death rate took a

*Woman baking bread in re-created James Fort, Jamestown Settlement history museum, Williamsburg, Virginia (Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation).*

toll on the numbers. When Captain Newport left the colony in Fall 1608 with “tryals of pitch, tarre, glasse, frankincense, and sope ashes, . . . clapbord and wainscot,” he left behind an estimated 200 people.<sup>14</sup> This represents a death rate of one out of three, but it may have been higher.

### **The Struggle to Survive**

The main problem the colonists constantly faced was a way to feed themselves. The supplies sent on these ships were lacking, usually used up or spoiled by the time they arrived in Virginia. For a while John Smith was able to establish tentative diplomatic relations



with the Powhatan Indians and to trade with them for food. He and other officials even traded English boys to the Indians, sometimes in exchange for Indian boys, to learn each other's language and customs and serve as interpreters. These included Samuel Collier, Henry Spelman, and Thomas Savage, the progenitor of a family on Virginia's Eastern Shore.<sup>15</sup> But by 1609 a drought that had been affecting the area for several years finally took its toll. The Powhatans had little or no food to trade as their supplies dwindled. So the English began taking the corn and other foods, forcing the Powhatans to the brink of warfare by late 1609.

That same year the Virginia Company sent another supply of settlers to Virginia under a new charter that provided for a sole governor and promoted the sale of stock in the Company to the public. The appointed governor, Lord de la Warr, sent in his stead a lieutenant, Sir Thomas Gates. The 500 settlers traveled in a fleet of nine ships. The majority straggled into Jamestown eventually, but the largest, *Sea Venture*, shipwrecked in Bermuda during a hurricane. It carried about 150 of the new settlers as well as the newly appointed lieutenant governor, Gates, the new secretary for the colony, William Strachey, and John Rolfe. During the winter they spent in Bermuda, these settlers used the remains of their ship to build two new ones, *Patience* and *Deliverance*, which they sailed to Virginia the following spring, arriving in May 1610.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, the ships that had arrived in Virginia in Fall 1609



*Man hoeing in tobacco field outside recreated James Fort, Jamestown Settlement history museum, Williamsburg, Virginia (Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation).*





brought about 250 new settlers, including some women and a few children. But Smith had angered the Powhatans so that they were unwilling to share what little food they had. That winter, they placed James Fort under siege, preventing settlers from hunting and foraging. Smith was blamed for a lot of troubles; when he was badly wounded in a gunpowder explosion and had to return to England for treatment, the accident probably saved his life.<sup>17</sup>

When Smith left, George Percy was put in charge. The settlers forced into the fort did not do well. Out of about 350 settlers at the start of the winter of 1609-10, only 60 were still alive at James Fort the following spring when those coming from Bermuda arrived; 30 more were living at the mouth of the James River at Point Comfort. Sir Thomas Gates made the decision to abandon the colony and sail back to England. As the ships traveled downriver towards the sea, Lord de la Warr, the new governor, arrived in Virginia with three ships carrying fresh supplies and new settlers. De la Warr ordered Gates to turn around and re-establish the settlement.<sup>18</sup>

This new triumvirate of De la Warr, Gates, and Marshall Sir Thomas Dale had extensive military experience fighting against the Spanish in Europe. They established the

“Lawes Divine, Morall and Martiall,” a series of laws used in military settings with strict punishments for breaking them. At about the same time John Rolfe, who arrived with the settlers from Bermuda, began growing a sweet scented tobacco enjoyed by the English, a type which came from the Spanish colonies. By 1614 he sent a shipment to England and the tobacco rush began. But tobacco was both



*Thomas West, Third Baron de la Warr (1577-1618), oil on panel, English, circa 1605, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, gift of the Gladys and Franklin Clark Foundation.*



land and labor intensive, requiring large amounts of both, and the death rate was still high for new immigrants.

### Settlements Beyond Jamestown

During the first seven years of the colony the company started three other settlements in addition to Jamestown. Colonists established Elizabeth City on the site of the former Indian town of Kecoughtan (today's Hampton). They settled Henrico just below today's Richmond, and Bermuda Hundred near current-day Hopewell, on the Appomattox River. At one point there were more people living upriver than at Jamestown because it was healthier at these upriver locations.<sup>19</sup>

Colonists established these other settlement sites during the skirmishing between the English and the Powhatans, palisading Henrico and Bermuda Hundred to protect them from attack. Powhatan warriors stole tools and weapons and took English prisoners. When the English found



*Pocahontas (circa 1596-1617), C. Gregory Stapko, after unknown artist, oil on canvas, American, circa 1958, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, gift of Paul Mellon.*

Pocahontas visiting with a tribe on the Potomac River in 1613, they kidnapped her to hold her for ransom for the return of these tools, weapons, and prisoners. But her father, Powhatan, only gave back some of what was taken. So she remained with the English, was taught English religion and customs, and was baptized with the Christian name Rebecca. During this time she met John Rolfe and the two married the same year. They had a son Thomas and in 1616 Company officials sent the family to England to financially promote



the colony. To end her story, Pocahontas became ill. As the Rolfe's prepared to return to Virginia in 1617, she died, and was buried at St. George's Church, Gravesend, England.<sup>20</sup>

In 1616, the Virginia Company stockholders expected a profit from their investments, but the company had nothing to pay them. Officials then started giving away land at 100 acres per share owned. Some shareholders in England combined their newly-acquired land and formed "particular plantations" along the James River, forcing the Indians off their prime lands along the river and its tributary creeks and streams. Landowners sent indentured servants to plant tobacco.<sup>21</sup>

The growing number of people in Virginia began to agitate for specific terms from the Virginia Company. They wanted to make some laws to govern themselves. The male settlers asked the company to send additional women to create a more settled life. Colonial leaders also wanted to establish a school for Indian boys to educate them to English ways. The company responded in 1618 with a set of instructions called the "Great Charter," which it sent to Virginia with a new governor, Sir George Yeardley.<sup>22</sup>

Yeardley arrived in 1619 and called for a selection of men from the settled areas to come to an assembly where they would meet with him and his Council of State as the first General Assembly. The group met for six days, approved some Virginia Company directives, and made some new laws to run the colony. Workers were sent to Henrico to begin building a school for Indian boys. Before it was finished, however, it was destroyed in the Indian war of 1622. The company sent women from England to marry settlers. In 1620 and 1621 about 147 young women arrived. They came from reputable families and were generally encouraged to go to Virginia to increase settlement there.<sup>23</sup>

### **Arrival of First Africans**

The year 1619 also witnessed the accidental arrival of the first recorded Africans in Virginia. These people were from the Kingdom of Ndongo in the Portuguese colony of Angola, and from the Kingdom of Kongo. They were slaves on a Portuguese ship enroute to the Spanish colonies in the Caribbean and Mexico as part of a contractual agreement between the two countries. In this agreement, Portugal continually supplied slaves from its African colony to the Spanish colonies. In the Caribbean that August 1619, two English



*Angolan industry, from **Descricao Historica Dos Tres Reinos Do Congo, Matamba E Angola**, Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi de Montecuccolo, 1690, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation.*

privateering ships captured that Portuguese ship, taking some of the human cargo and heading to Virginia. There they traded the people for food, and the Africans were placed in the hands of government officials, probably as servants, not slaves.<sup>24</sup>

These first Africans came from lands in which people lived in small villages and large walled towns. Their houses were like English wattle and daub except that they were round and covered with palm leaves. Women grew crops, took care of children and cooked, while men hunted, fished, cared for livestock and tapped certain palm trees for oil. They made tools and weapons of fine steel and smelted and worked other metals. They mined tar and rock salt, and cut the bark of baobab and other trees which was pounded to obtain a fine thread from which a cloth was woven for export. Religion played a major role in their lives, both native and Christian, which they learned from the Portuguese.<sup>25</sup>

The first Africans in Virginia probably were baptized Christians, because the Portuguese did not enslave people without first baptizing them. One of these first was Angelo (Angela), a woman who



arrived in 1619 and eventually served in the household of William Peirce. Colonists probably treated Africans much like English indentured servants in the early years. Some, like Anthony and Mary Johnson, were able to earn their freedom and acquire their own land and servants. The Johnsons first served on the plantation of Richard Bennett, but by the 1640s, they had become free persons, and settled on Virginia's Eastern Shore. They eventually accumulated more than 900 acres of land and had one slave and one servant of their own.<sup>26</sup>

### **Expanded Settlement and Conflict with the Powhatan**

The English had settled up and down the James River by 1622. The Powhatan Indians had tired of the English taking the best land along the waterways. Their leader, Opechancanough, took control and attacked the English. The settlers retaliated, and for ten years the two groups were at war. This war, plus the continued high death rate and the disputes in England between various Virginia Company leaders, led King James I to revoke the company's charter and establish Virginia as a royal colony in 1624.<sup>27</sup>

Expansion in Virginia slowed as English men and women hesitated to travel to a place of war and death. By the 1640s, however, the colony began to grow again after peace was made with the Indians. Colonists first moved north through the Tidewater, settling along the Chesapeake's main tributary rivers.<sup>28</sup> Then the colony expanded west of the fall line into the Piedmont. By mid-century, when economic conditions improved in England, fewer English people wanted to travel to Virginia. Tobacco farmers, needing a source of labor, turned to the increased use of African labor.

The system of slavery gradually evolved as landowners began to hold these people in lifetime servitude. Officials enacted the first formal slave laws in the 1660s.<sup>29</sup> The Powhatan Indian population began to drop, especially after the 1644 war, and many of the people were placed on reservations with an inadequate amount of land to carry out their traditional subsistence activities of hunting and fishing.<sup>30</sup> Among the English, more settled family life slowly developed.

In 1613 Sir Thomas Dale hoped that Virginia would become "inhabitant with good people." It is difficult to judge how "good" these people were, or on what to base that judgment. The Powhatan people who lived in Virginia at the time of settlement had evolved into a



complex chiefdom that made use of the resources around them. Because of their desire for trade items and curiosity about the English, they allowed new settlers in Virginia and gave them aid. But the Indians eventually found their population reduced due to this English “invasion.” The English who came were a diverse group and included foreigners. Some sought fortunes, some adventure and a new life, others a New World claim for the glory of England. Some had good intentions, while the plans of others were questionable. The Africans had little choice in their lives. They were brought against their will and ultimately many of them would be enslaved for the rest of their lives. But all brought something to the mix, creating Virginia’s cultural diversity. Virginia grew and prospered because there were people who persevered.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Dale, “Letter to Sir Thomas Smyth,” June 1613, in Edward Wright Haile, *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony* (Champlain, Va.: RoundHouse, 1998), 757.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph McAvoy and Lynn McAvoy, *Archaeological Investigations of Site 44SX202, Cactus Hill, Sussex County, Virginia*. (Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Research Report Series No. 8, 1997). Most of the information on the Powhatan traditional culture is taken from *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia: Their Traditional Culture* by Dr. Helen Rountree (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989). Dr. Rountree’s research is taken primarily from the writings of early colonists such as Captain John Smith and William Strachey.

<sup>3</sup>Most of the information on the three Powhatan people featured in this article is from Dr. Helen Rountree, *Pocahontas’s People: The Powhatan Indians of Virginia Through Four Centuries* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990). All three are referenced in the index.

<sup>4</sup>Captain John Smith, *Complete Works of Captain John Smith*, ed. Philip Barbour (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 1:173.

<sup>5</sup>William Strachey, *The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1953), 113.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>7</sup>George Percy left the most complete record of the voyage to Virginia in 1606-07. See Percy, “Observations gathered out of a discourse . . .” in Edward Wright Haile, *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony* (Champlain, Va.: RoundHouse, 1998), 85-100.

<sup>8</sup>Information on the seven councilors comes from Philip Barbour’s “Biographical Dictionary” in *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith*, ed. Philip Barbour (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), vol. 1 and also in Edward Wright Haile, *Jamestown Narratives* (Champlain, Va.: RoundHouse, 1998), 42-67.

<sup>9</sup>Captain John Smith, in Barbour, ed., *Complete Works of Captain John Smith*, 1:434.

<sup>10</sup>William Kelso, *Jamestown Rediscovery, 1994-2004* (Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, 2004), 19-21. Also Barbour, ed., *Complete Works of Captain John Smith*, 1:207-209.

<sup>11</sup>Population figure in Barbour, ed., *Complete Works*, 2:323. First Supply listed in Barbour, ed., *Complete Works*, 1:222-223.

<sup>12</sup>Barbour, ed., *Complete Works of Captain John Smith*, 1:240-242.





<sup>13</sup>Virginia M. Meyer and John F. Dorman, *Adventurers of Purse and Person: Virginia, 1607-1624/5* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1987), 389-390.

<sup>14</sup>Barbour, ed., *Complete Works of Captain John Smith*, 1:240.

<sup>15</sup>For more information on the English interpreters, see J. Frederick Fausz, "Middlemen in Peace and War: Virginia's Earliest Indian Interpreters, 1608-1632," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 95 (Jan. 1987): 43-64.

<sup>16</sup>Louis B. Wright, ed., *A Voyage to Virginia in 1609* (Charlottesville, Va.: The University Press of Virginia, 1964). This booklet includes two accounts of the 1609 voyage and the wreck of *Sea Venture*, including William Strachey's account.

<sup>17</sup>More details about this winter can be found in the account of George Percy, "A True Relation of the proceedings . . ." in Edward Wright Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 497-519.

<sup>18</sup>Analysis of "starving time" population figures by Nancy Egloff, April 10, 1990 (Memorandum). Based on research by J. Frederick Fausz, "'An Abundance of Blood Shed on Both Sides': England's First Indian War, 1609-1614," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* Vol. 98 (Jan. 1990): 3-54, especially Appendix.

<sup>19</sup>William Strachey, *For the Colony in Virginea Britannia: Lawes Divine, Morall and Martiall, etc.*, ed. David Flaherty (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1969); Ralph Hamor, *A True Discourse of the Present State of Virginia* (Richmond, Va.: Virginia State Library, 1957), pp. 24-33; John Rolfe, *A True Relation of the State of Virginia . . . 1616* (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1951), 9-11.

<sup>20</sup>Ralph Hamor, *A True Discourse . . .*, pp. 3-11; Helen Rountree, *Pocahontas's People: The Powhatan Indians of Virginia Through Four Centuries* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 58-64.

<sup>21</sup>Virginia Company, "Instructions to George Yeardley," *The Three Charters of the Virginia Company of London with Seven Related Documents*, Samuel Bemiss, ed. (Williamsburg, Va.: Virginia 350th Anniversary Celebration Corporation, 1957), 98-100; Virginia Meyer and John F. Dorman, *Adventurers of Purse and Person, Virginia, 1607-1624/5* (Richmond, Va.: Order of First Families of Virginia, 1987), p. xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>22</sup>Virginia Company, "Instructions to George Yeardley," *The Three Charters of the Virginia Company . . .*, ed. Bemiss, 95, 100; H. R. McIlwaine, "The Maids Who Came to Virginia in 1620 and 1621 for Husbands," *The Reviewer* Vol. 1 (April 1921):105-113; David R. Ransome, "Wives for Virginia, 1621," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, Vol. XLVIII (Jan. 1991): 3-18.

<sup>23</sup>John Pory, *Proceedings of the General Assembly of Virginia, 1619* (Jamestown, Va.: Jamestown Foundation, 1969); numbers of women given in McIlwaine, "The Maids Who Came . . .", 113 and in Ransome, "Wives for Virginia," 5, 10.

<sup>24</sup>Engel Sluiter, "New Light on the '20. and Odd Negroes' Arriving in Virginia, August 1619," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, Vol. LIV (April 1997): 395-398.

<sup>25</sup>John Thornton, "The African Experience of the '20. and Odd Negroes' Arriving in Virginia in 1619," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, Vol. LV (July 1998):421-434.

<sup>26</sup>Virginia M. Meyer and John F. Dorman, *Adventurers of Purse and Person, Virginia, 1607-1624/5* (Richmond, Va.: Order of First Families of Virginia, 1987), pp. 31, 476; T. H. Breen and Stephen Innes, "Myne Owne Ground": *Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640-1676* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 7-18.

<sup>27</sup>Wesley Frank Craven, *The Dissolution of the Virginia Company* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1964).

<sup>28</sup>W. Stitt Robinson, Jr., *Mother Earth: Land Grants in Virginia, 1607-1699* (Williamsburg, Va.: Virginia 350th Anniversary Celebration Corporation, 1957).

<sup>29</sup>William Waller Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large . . . The Laws of Virginia* (New York: R. & W. & G. Bartow, 1823), Vol. 2, 26, 170, 260, 270, 280, as examples of earliest ones.

<sup>30</sup>Helen Rountree, *Pocahontas's People: The Powhatan Indians of Virginia Through Four Centuries* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 89-92.



# William Alphonso Murrill and the natural history of Staunton at the end of the nineteenth century

by Madison Brown, YuLee Larner,  
and Mark Gatewood

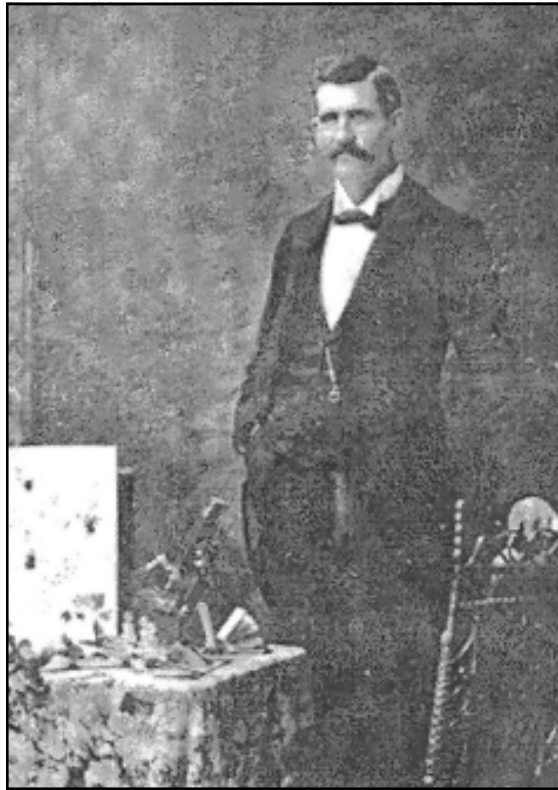
*William Alphonso Murrill (1869-1957), a celebrated mycologist<sup>1</sup>, taxonomist, writer, and authority on the fleshy fungi (Basidiomycetes), was born October 13, 1869, near Lynchburg, Virginia. He collected over 70,000 specimens of fungi in North and South America, Mexico, and the Caribbean and described some 1,700 new species. Murrill was a young teacher at the Wesleyan Female Institute, Staunton, for the school terms of 1893 through 1897. In those days he was not only an avid, well-educated “naturalist” but also an enthusiastic diarist who kept careful field notes of his many forays into the area.*

*Murrill was an interesting, talented, accomplished, and eventually world-famous man. This article, presented as the program talk for the spring 2007 meeting of the Augusta County Historical Society at the Museum of American Frontier Culture in Staunton, is a tour of Staunton and environs as seen through his eyes as well as an account of his life before and after the Staunton years. The three authors are all local writers and naturalists who explored Murrill’s environs a century later.*

## **William Alphonso Murrill: His Life Before Staunton by Madison Brown**

He called himself a “true Virginian” and proved it as he bragged about his family: his father, who fought with Stuart and Lee, had “a little Scotch-Irish blood but was mostly English” and his mother was “all English, of the dark-haired and active Welsh type.”<sup>2</sup> Murrill was named for William, his father’s brother, and Alphonso, his mother’s brother.<sup>3</sup>

William Alphonso Murrill says he was born October 13, 1869, into a solid Methodist family on Pammell Farm, near Lynch’s Station, south



*Murrill as a teacher in Staunton, Virginia*

of Lynchburg in Campbell County, Virginia. He related that the family moved three times before his twelfth year, first near Lynchburg, then to Bedford County and finally to near Bonsack, Botetourt County, the location of his Uncle William's farm. In his own words he told us of the constant theme of these years, "... the sights and sounds of the fields and woods made a deep impression on this childhood heart and a love of Nature was planted deep in his breast, to grow and broaden with the passing years." Schooling for Murrill during these years was famine or feast. His first teacher was Mr. Olney, a former sea captain, who "should never have been a teacher of little boys and girls." Mr. Jones "was entirely different and [Murrill] liked him from the first...There was nothing [he] would not do for Mr Jones."<sup>4</sup>

By the fall of 1881, the family was living south of Blacksburg where his father was manager of the Miller Farm, when Murrill, at the age of eleven going on twelve, entered Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical



College there. He mentioned “kind and patient instructors” in mathematics, English, French, chemistry, and physics. This last subject was taught by Professor Floyd Davis “in the modern manner and [who] introduced him to the study and teaching of true science.” Murrill mentioned his extracurricular activities: “marble playing, in which he was a champion,” assisting in editing *The Grey Jacket*, attending all the meetings of the Maury Literary Society, playing the organ at home, for Sunday school, and for church.<sup>5</sup> He exhausted courses in Blacksburg, graduating in 1886 with highest honors in agriculture and a year later in mechanics with a B. S. degree.<sup>6</sup>

In the fall of 1887 Murrill took charge of a small country school near Blacksburg. Here is a story in his own words, which will gain in significance as we follow his way to Staunton.

Some of the pupils were older but none bigger or better educated...The girls gave him more trouble than the boys, for they were pretty and had unusually impressive eyes...One small group, however, that lived in Coalbank Hollow showed the seamy side and called for much patience. One big rough girl belonging to this group took it into her head to defy the teacher. One morning...Virgie refused pointblank to obey teacher. No chance there for physical force; it had to be the power of the eye or something intangible or mystic, something indirect and unexpected...“I’ll give you twenty seconds to change your mind,” he said, and began to count and accent the counts with his pointed finger. “One!—two!—three!”...The situation was critical enough to determine the teacher’s future in that community. “Four!—five!—six!—seven!...eight!—nine!—ten!” He was very determined, and getting a little desperate; his eyes fairly blazed. Virgie began to squirm a little; he noted this as a hopeful sign and piled on the power. “Eleven!—twelve!” More squirming. Her eyes fell. “Thirteen!”— “Stop, teacher,” she said in a low husky voice. “I give up. I’m sorry.” Then she covered her face with her hands and began to sob...Virgie became a model pupil, studied hard and was a power for good in her community.<sup>7</sup>

Murrill’s mother, a graduate of Hollins Institute, wanted her son to continue his education and have more time to mature. She obtained a place for him at Randolph-Macon in Ashland, the Virginia college for young Virginia Methodists, and arranged for a loan to cover his room and tuition expenses for one session.<sup>8</sup>

One session extended to three and a degree each year. He received the B. S. in June of 1889.<sup>9</sup> He made such a positive impression at Randolph-Macon that he was invited back to take the course leading to an A.B. which he received the next year.<sup>10</sup> In anticipation of



the A.M. Professor Smith suggested Murrill take the three-year Greek requirement in one year. He excelled in Greek obtaining first standing in the first two classes and third in the top class. At the end of the 1890-91 session he received the A.M.<sup>11</sup>

That hints at Murrill's intellectual capacity and energy level. Outside of academic courses, he listed an astonishing array of activities. He met with the literary society, edited the "Randolph-Macon Monthly," entered and won the essay contest with his three articles, and played piano for chapel and the glee club. He spoke of a full social life with the young people his age, "went on picnics whenever possible" and hayrides on holidays. He maintained his physical fitness by working out in the gymnasium and on the track regularly. He took "a fling at football" and enjoyed his share of the two gallons of ice cream offered to the winning team in the Senior Tug-of-war. Aside from attending Sunday school himself, he "managed a little Sunday school out in Hanover Slashes." Each summer he returned home to help his father on the farm.<sup>12</sup>

During the academic year 1890-1891, Edgar Henly Rowe, a Methodist minister who had just become headmaster at Bowling Green Female Seminary, came to Ashland on a recruiting trip and found in Murrill all he could possibly want in a teacher for "senior classes in English, Latin, French, German, Mathematics, and all the Natural Science."<sup>13</sup> Not only did Murrill show his wide ranging academic versatility, but also his energy, diligence, interests, talents, and sociability. He "helped in social and religious work, devoted his holidays to long tramps with the Biologist pupils; and his evenings to piles of essays, notebooks and examination papers. Sometimes he joined other young men in serenading; he belonged to a mixed quartet at the school; often he was invited to parties in town; and, best of all, he introduced the game of prisoners' base, which became exceedingly popular with the girls."<sup>14</sup>

Murrill participated in a benefit for the town of Bowling Green. His best Latin pupil was chosen for the star role and he played her father. What meant the most to him on that occasion was meeting the principal speaker, Thomas Nelson Page of Richmond, the well-known writer of popular romantic novels set in the South.<sup>15</sup> When Murrill and thirty pupils went to Washington for the Easter holidays, they saw the sights and visited the White House on one of the President's receiving days where none other than Murrill himself



*Wesleyan Female Institute in Staunton*

introduced each of the Bowling Green girls to the President of the United States. As he liked to do, he mentions the personages encountered on the trip. They heard the famous Polish pianist Paderewski playing with the New York Symphony Orchestra one day, and heard him again the next day in a solo recital.<sup>16</sup>

In 1850 the Methodist Church opened Wesleyan Female Institute on the corner of Main and Lewis Streets in down town Staunton. Twenty years later the school moved to larger quarters on the block of Johnson Street at the top of the hill east of Fayette Street. Forty-three years later in 1893, Murrill became a teacher there. "The work...was similar to that at Bowling Green but on a larger scale," he remarks. Before the school term opened, Murrill spent "part of the summer ...selecting teachers, planning courses, and getting out announcements for the coming year. In return for this assistance, [Murrill] was sent to Missouri and Arkansas in an effort to secure pupils, and [was] permitted to visit the World's [Columbian] Exposition at Chicago after his work was done."<sup>17</sup> He remembered the notables he saw and heard in the "White City" as the fair grounds were called: Theodore Thomas, who had just been appointed conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Maud Powell, the leading American violin virtuosa, and John Warwich Daniel, the "silver-tongued" Virginia Senator who gave the Virginia Day speech at the fair.<sup>18</sup>





## William Murrill: His Staunton Years, 1893-1897

by YuLee Larner

I was first introduced to William Murrill in 1979 when I received a phone call from Claybrook Elder who asked if I had ever seen the book, *The Natural History of Staunton, Virginia*, which was in the rare book section of the Staunton Public Library. I scanned the library book and wrote a column about it on February 4, 1979, in which I asked readers to contact me if they had any information about the author.

Soon, McKelden Smith appeared at my door with a copy in his hand, and he said, "You may borrow this book for one year." Before the year was over, I had obtained my own copy from a dealer in rare books. Also, in response to that column, Norman P. Rowe replied that he had grown up on Buttermilk Springs Road and offered to come and show us the location of the many springs Murrill had mentioned in his book.

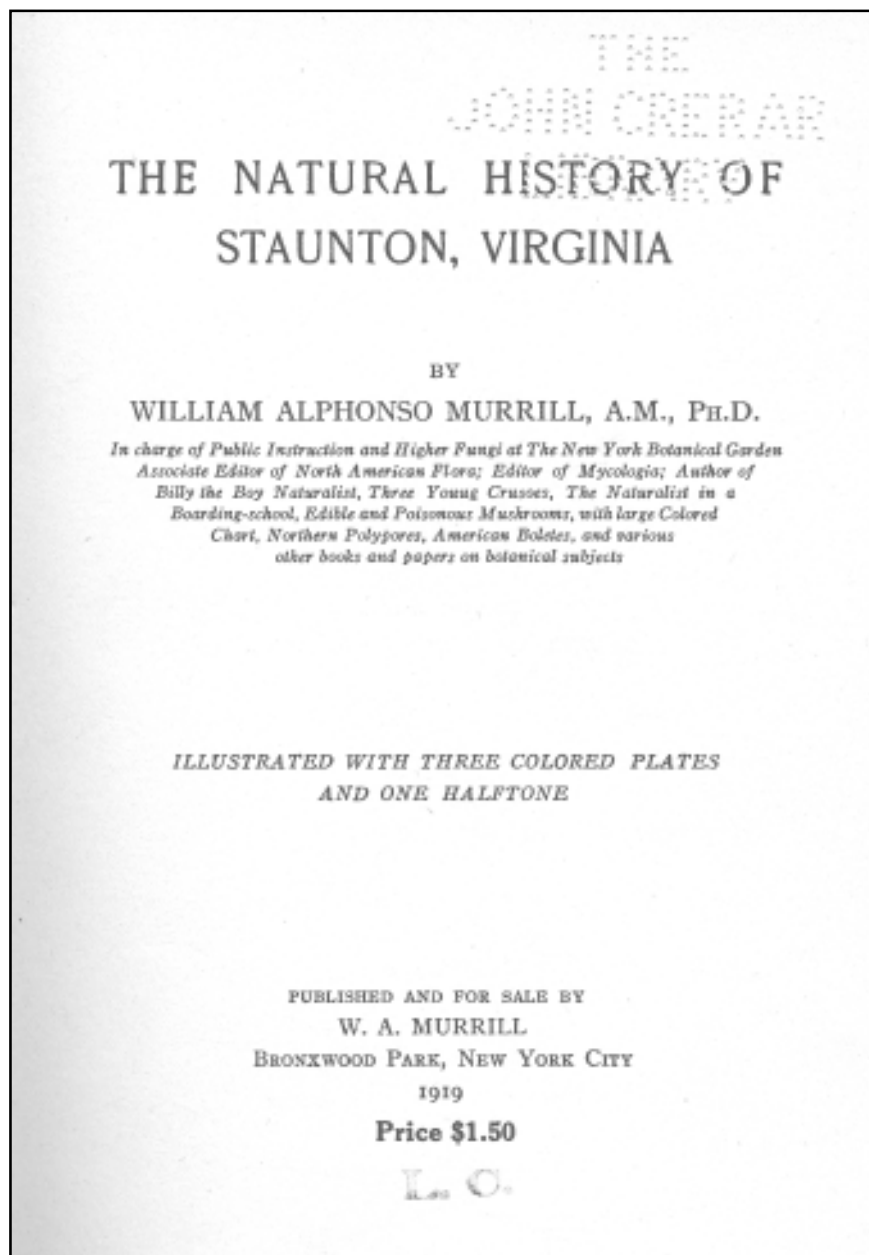
*The Natural History of Staunton* is basically excerpts from William Murrill's diary during the four years (1893-97) he taught at the Wesleyan Female Institute, which was then located on the corner of Johnson and Fayette Streets in Staunton.<sup>19</sup>

He introduced Staunton to his readers in the first paragraphs of Chapter 1:

Staunton is an attractive and thriving little city situated in the heart of the great Shenandoah Valley and famous for its educational institutions.....In the immediate vicinity of the town are excellent collecting grounds of considerable variety for the student of natural history; while a dozen miles to the north and south are magnificent mountains ranges easily reached by highways or railroads.<sup>20</sup>

Most of Murrill's notes are from observations he made within a three-mile radius of the school. My goal was to retrace his steps and try to locate all the birding sites mentioned in his diary. From his description, we know that the area he referred to as Peck's Woods is now Montgomery Hall Park. Daisy Dell is the area around Bessie Weller School, and "the branch" which he crossed on his way to Betsy Bell, is Asylum Creek, which runs beside the school. He also visited "The Cemetery" and "The Park," "Sears Hill," "Bloodroot Woods," "Fern Woods" and many other sites.<sup>21</sup>

Thanks to Mr. Rowe, who drove with us one day, we were able to locate six different springs, all except one, in the general vicinity of Buttermilk Spring.<sup>22</sup>



*Title page of Murrill's book about the natural history of Staunton*

For this presentation, I will quote some of my favorite diary entries, which will show his appreciation of the natural world, and his amazing knowledge of all the plants and animals that live in this area.

In Chapter 2, his diary entry read: "I shall always like a natural object and a beautiful thought concerning it. Shall I ever be a real



investigator? Or rather, shall I catch and hold in the sunlight, drops that would otherwise never make rainbows?"<sup>23</sup>

The number of subjects that he taught, is astounding. On November 1, 1895, he wrote: "My private work this year will be: Biology, Bible, Art, Geology, Body, Literature. This term will be devoted to Art, Zoology, Bibles, Epics, Dramas, etc."<sup>24</sup>

One of my favorite quotes which may indicate that all was not roses even for this sentimental naturalist:

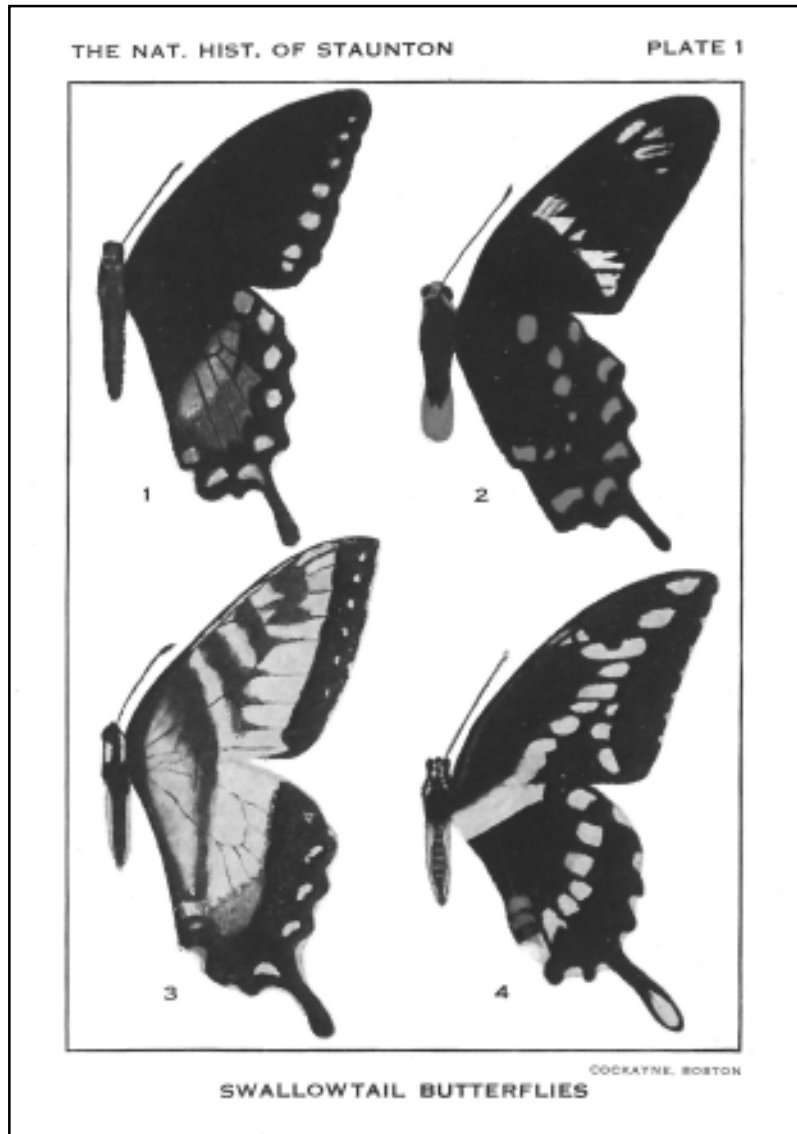
A Plan of Nature Study for April. "Birds and flowers will keep one busy. Make collections of both and observe the battles and songs of birds. Watch for the eggs of the Phoebe about the middle of the month. Study the circulation of the blood in a frog's foot. Take up mental hygiene; because it is much needed now."<sup>25</sup>

**March 25, 1895.** "While walking down the meadow with Miss Jeannette, I heard numbers of hylas (spring peepers) but they also had been making music for two weeks. Two long-legged lanky killdeers sped over the meadow ahead of us, uttering their characteristic cry."<sup>26</sup> On March 25, 1979, my husband and I decided to visit two of Murrill's favorite places. First we drove to Buttermilk Spring, and as we approached the damp meadow, we heard the "hylas" – and would you believe this – almost immediately, two killdeer ran in front of us and made short flights over the marshy meadows.

That same day we drove up Betsy Bell and while we were too early for wild flowers, we saw the first butterfly of the season, the brown and yellow mourning cloak – I believe Murrill would be glad to know that the butterflies still survive on Betsy Bell where he spent so many hours studying the birds and flowers. He had an extensive collection of butterflies, and the only illustrations in his book are of three pages of butterflies, including the mourning cloak. He mounted butterflies, which were displayed in ten cases, with glass top and sheets of cork or peat glued to the bottom, covered with smooth white paper.<sup>27</sup>

**March 27, 1895.** "Such a delightfully warm and agreeable day! I went with the class after hepatica, which is now in full flower. We took our time and thoroughly enjoyed everything."<sup>28</sup>

**April 1, 1895.** "Since the hard winter was broken, spring has steadily gained ground; Last week the wild geese went north; last



*Plate of butterfly drawings from Murrill's book*

night three robins sang themselves to sleep; and this bright morning was merry with songs of chippy, robin, and tufted titmouse. The fawn lilies opened in the warm room; and outside the periwinkle is twisting itself into bloom. The trees are in for a race. One can almost hear the buds bursting and the ground cracking, while the hearts of the birds are breaking with their burden of young love. A flicker was seen with a flock of blackbirds. Several mourning-doves were seen in pairs. It has been the warmest day of the season."<sup>29</sup>



In April 1895, he and some of his students spent Easter week in Washington. Here is his description of that trip. April 22, 1895. "I went to Washington on April 14 with a party of girls, and spent Easter week there. The trip was full of sunshine and pleasure. At Mt. Vernon, on April 18, I found the first spring beauty I ever saw covering the knoll on the right side of the path. Winter cress was also in bloom. Going into the woods alone, I noticed a little wild rabbit sleeping on the sunny side of a white oak tree, so I caught it by coming upon it suddenly from behind the tree and brought it home in my pocket. It is now in a box in my library enjoying some cabbage leaves."<sup>30</sup>

March 6, 1896. "A flock of snowbirds singing their delicate, far away songs. A few fox sparrows were with them, and I heard songs that must have been theirs, but did not actually see one singing."<sup>31</sup>

April 11, 1897. "My pet rattlesnake, which I have kept in a cage in the biological laboratory for some time, shed its skin today, which was a highly improper thing for a rattlesnake to do so early in the season."<sup>32</sup>

These diary entries comprise only 109 of the 216 pages in the book. There is a chapter on Virginia Geology at the beginning. After the final diary entry, there are nine chapters describing in scientific terms, a complete list of all the plants he had collected and identified in and around Staunton, including flowers, shrubs, vines, and trees, and locations where they were found. Following the plant lists, there is a chapter containing an extensive collection of some of his favorite quotations related to nature. He also was a musician and several pages are devoted to poems that refer to music.

But the whip-poor-will wails on the moor,  
And day has deserted the west;  
The moon glimmers down thro' the vines at my door  
And the robin has flown to her nest.

*James G. Clarke* <sup>33</sup>

There's music in the sighing of a reed;  
There's music in the gushing of a rill;  
There's music in all things, if men had ears;  
Their earth is but an echo of the spheres.

*Byron* <sup>34</sup>



I picture William Murrill, a young fellow, tall and rawboned, vigorous, but unhurried as he roamed the fields and woods around Staunton. I think of him as I identify plants and birds, many of which are the same today as they were more than a hundred years ago. I think of him when I see pink fleabane at Bessie Weller Green Lab, rattlesnake weed and wild geranium on Betsy Bell, or mayapple at Montgomery Hall Park.

The final entry in his diary describes his last days in Staunton in the summer of 1897. "After the school closed at Staunton, I went to Blacksburg and devoted myself especially to collecting, pressing, and studying all the parasitic fungi to be found within a radius of almost twenty miles of the place, often walking thirty miles a day over the mountains and finishing off with a game of tennis. Early in the autumn, I departed for Cornell University with a ton or so of fungi and a fund of health and experience sufficient to last for many years. My record for the summer was over a thousand miles."<sup>35</sup>

While William Murrill spent only three winters in Staunton, he left his mark on this "attractive and thriving little city, situated in the heart of the great Shenandoah Valley."<sup>36</sup>

Like William Murrill, we all should "take our time and thoroughly enjoy everything."<sup>37</sup> I wish I had known him in person, don't you?<sup>38</sup>

### **Murrill: The Years After Staunton, 1897-1957** **by Mark Gatewood**

We have established that during the years 1893 to 1897 William Alphonso Murrill taught at the Wesleyan Female Institute in Staunton and on his rambles about the area, alone and with students, began his lifelong interest in the natural world. Now we follow him – or attempt to, as he was often a bit elusive – to see where his career path led.

In 1897, William Alphonso Murrill married Edna Lee Luttrell, a student several years younger than he;<sup>39</sup> their only child, a son, was born 1899 and died in infancy. The marriage would end in divorce. He acknowledges this marriage in a two-word dedication in *The Natural History of Staunton, Virginia*, and, apparently, never again. In his 1945 autobiography, Murrill makes no mention of wife or son; his devotion to the study of nature would win him faithful friends, respectful colleagues and adoring students, but cost him a wife and family.





From 1897 to 1900, Murrill was a graduate student at Cornell University in New York;<sup>40</sup> he earned his Ph.D. with a thesis on *The Development of the Archegonium and Fertilization in the Hemlock Spruce* (*Tsuga canadensis*, Carr.).<sup>41</sup>

After his years of observing and recording birds, insects, and plants in and around Staunton, Murrill was evidently ready to focus his observations in a more exacting way on the some of the most minute phenomena in nature.

After receiving his Ph.D. he went to Paris to attend the International Botanical Congress, then moved to New York City. In 1901 he became a member of the prestigious Torrey Botanical Club, an important career step for anyone in the natural sciences. He taught biology at DeWitt Clinton High School until 1904<sup>42</sup> when he was appointed assistant curator at the New York Botanical Garden and began in earnest his career in the field of mycology – the study of mushrooms and fungi.

If you've ever gone out with a field guide and an amateur's zeal and tried to identify mushrooms, you know how difficult and confusing they can be. Over his career, Murrill discovered and named tens of thousands of new species of mushrooms and fungi, earning himself the nickname "The Mushroom Man." This achievement may not bring you to the edge of your seat, but one Murrill discovery may resonate with us.

In the summer of 1905, an employee of the botanical garden informed Dr. Murrill that many chestnut trees in the park were diseased or dying. The employee suspected a fungal agent and applied Bordeaux mixture, a compound of copper sulfate and hydrated lime which was developed in the vineyards in the Bordeaux region of France and was a common fungicide of the time. The treatment didn't work and Murrill began an investigation. In June of 1906 he published in the *Journal of the New York Botanical Garden* an article



*Murrill in New York*



titled "A Serious Chestnut Disease." In this and subsequent articles, he described the destructive action of the disease and speculated on its method of spreading. Finally, in the *Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club*, he named the fungal pathogen *Diaporthe parasitica*. We now know it as *Cryphonectria parasitica*, the chestnut blight.

As befits an active scientist, Dr. Murrill published prodigiously with a career total of some 500 scientific articles, 800 popular articles, and 20 books. He produced a number of books aimed at popular audiences. In 1918 he published *Billy the Boy Naturalist*, a rambling collection of reminiscences of his boyhood in the Lynchburg area. In 1919 he published *The Naturalist in a Boarding School* and *The Natural History of Staunton, Virginia*. In the 1940s he published books on trees, rocks, flowers and other natural history topics, followed in 1950 by an odd, slightly preachy little book titled *Success Stories for Girls*.

One biographer relates that Murrill returned to Staunton in 1920.<sup>43</sup> The *Staunton News-Leader* for 3 August, 1920, reported a meeting of plant pathologists – the American Phytopathological Society – in Staunton to study the diseases of apple and peach trees. The gathered scientists toured the fruit-growing areas of the Shenandoah Valley, visiting orchards and viewing spraying and dusting experiments for control of such diseases as apple root rot and cedar rust. Murrill's name is not among those mentioned in the *News-Leader* article.

With a full schedule of travel, teaching, collecting trips and publications, Murrill's star should have been on the rise. Two circumstances marred his career aspirations. In 1918, on the fourth of a series of European trips authorized by the Botanical Garden, Murrill failed to return and remained out of communication for some months. During this hiatus, the garden filled his vacant position and his wife divorced him for abandonment. When he finally returned, he explained that he had been hospitalized in a small French town and was near death for several weeks, unable to communicate. His malady was a kidney disease which was to plague him for the rest of his life. The botanical garden's response was to demote him to a position as Supervisor of Public Instruction. Further, he began to be at odds with botanical garden director Nathaniel Lord Britton over the naming of his new species of mushrooms.

Taxonomy – the assigning of names to living things – is a difficult and contentious process and it is beyond our scope to debate



Murrill's ethics or prowess in his life's work. I'll explain it like this: if you walk out into your front yard and pluck a sprig of grass and declare that it is a new species, previously unknown to science, you have to do several things. First, you review the entire literature of grasses to be sure your new species hasn't already been described. Then you describe it, give it a name according to rigid rules of botanical nomenclature and publish it in the scientific journals. Now you sit back and wait for all the other grass experts to read it. When the experts start assailing your determination, you defend your position and the court of scientific opinion eventually finds you right or wrong. Simply stated, Murrill may not have been as rigorous in this process as might be desired and he drew the ire of his superior. He finally resigned from the New York Botanical Garden in 1924.

Following his resignation from the New York Botanical Garden, Murrill returned to the Lynchburg area to live with an aunt. Freed from the burdens of a rigorous science career, he settled briefly into a Henry David Thoreau period, observing the plants and wildlife of the nearby mountains and building a log cabin. Today, he might be diagnosed as having suffered from some form of depression. Biographers hint at some mental instability resulting from his family and marital losses, loss of his botanical garden position and maybe just the mental wear and tear of life in a stressful scientific discipline. In any case, his time in Virginia seems to have restored him and prepared him for a new phase in his career.

During his years with the botanical garden, Dr. Murrill had made collecting trips to Florida; after about a year in Virginia, he was drawn back to the rich plant life of the Sunshine State and made his way to Gainesville, probably in the winter of 1925. Like many passionate naturalists, Murrill was often careless of his personal arrangements and spent some time living "off the grid." His living arrangements in his early years in Gainesville may have included the "Tin Can Tourist Camp" – one of many campgrounds that sprang up to support tourists traveling by automobile.

From early childhood, Murrill had studied piano and had become a gifted pianist. This led to another unexpected turn in his career path. In 1926, Dr. George Weber, of the University of Florida, recognized the now rather tattered Dr. Murrill playing classical piano in a pavilion at the Tin Can Tourist Camp in Gainesville. Thus Murrill



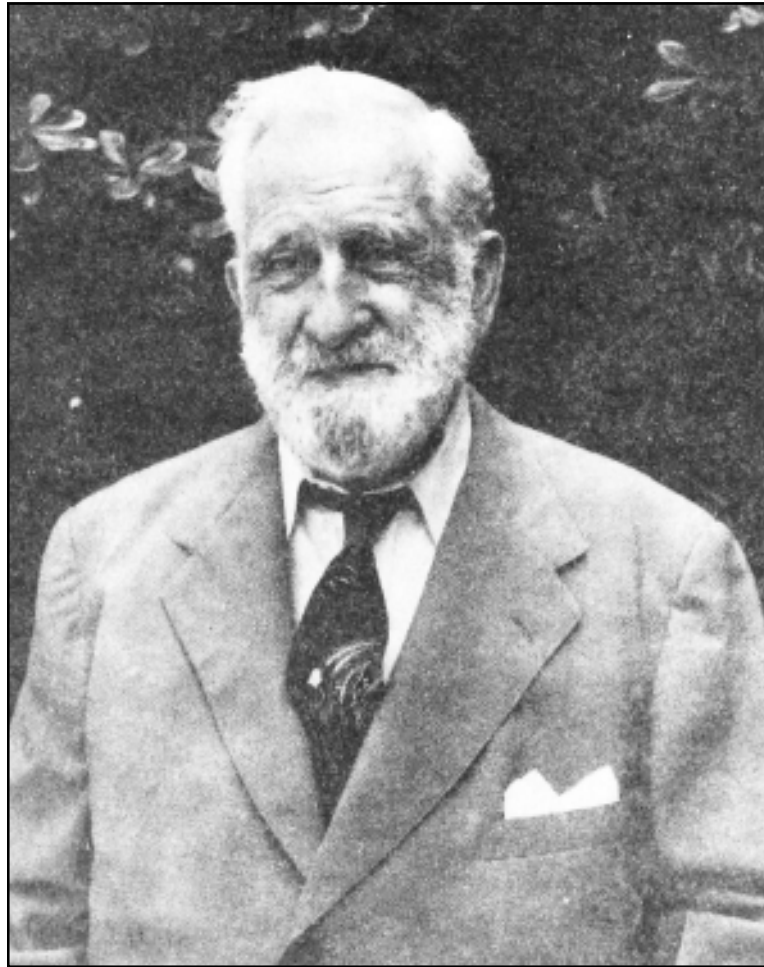
reconnected with his academic career at the University of Florida and began again to publish on new fungi he was finding. The university gave him a desk and space in a stair landing and during the summer mushroom collecting season he often slept in the lobby of the Student Union Building. Using some windfall profits from the sale of a book, Murrill was able to buy property and eventually built a series of small houses, living in one and renting the others. His outgoing personality, knowledge, and ready supply of good stories made him a popular figure among students and faculty. The university was eventually persuaded to grant Murrill a fifty dollars a month honorarium for his work in collecting.

In addition to his work at the university, Murrill worked with local garden clubs and with Boy and Girl Scouts. During his final years in Florida, he published 118 scientific and popular papers. His last publication, in 1955, was of a new species of *Amanita* which he found in Gainesville. It was to be his last discovery. Murrill died on 25 December, 1957, in the Alachua General Hospital in Gainesville. His grave is in the Evergreen Cemetery in Gainesville, among pines and live oaks. His small stone reads: "William Alphonso Murrill, October 13, 1869 – December 25, 1957, Author – Naturalist – Editor."

So lived and died William Alphonso Murrill—for us, perhaps, just a footnote to Staunton's history. His tenure in Staunton was brief and his chief material contribution was a modest book of his observations of plants, birds, and places in late nineteenth century Staunton. Even this is a flawed record, for Murrill left Staunton each spring for Blacksburg, robbing us of the opportunity to share his eyes and ears on the summer life of Staunton. *The Natural History of Staunton, Virginia* is still an important piece of environmental history and gives us a basis for comparison with some of the areas which survive today – Betsy Bell Mountain, Montgomery Hall Park, the Bessie Weller Green Lab, the Butter-milk Springs area – and many which do not. And it was here, on his rambles in Staunton and surrounding Augusta County, that Murrill first began the love affair with nature that led him to the study of a large, diverse and difficult group of organisms and ultimately added to our knowledge of the diversity of life on earth.

### **Return of the Naturalist: Further Notes on Murrill**

Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, appeared in 1974. In her Chapter 13 "The Horns of the Altar" she sees "That the world is old



*Murrill at the age of eighty-six*

and frayed..."<sup>44</sup> from a variety of very natural causes such as predation and parasitism. She quotes but does not name "A southwest Virginia naturalist [who] noted in his journal for April 1896, 'Mourning-cloaks are plentiful but broken, having lived through the winter.'"<sup>45</sup> That is part of Murrill's entry for April 22 in his *Natural History*.

\* \* \*

In 1979 Yulee Lerner, author of Part II of this article, was the first Stauntonian to read Murrill's *Natural History* and appreciate it for its unique historical and natural historical significance. An accomplished ornithologist and "naturalist" herself, she introduced Murrill to the readers of *The Sunday News Leader* in a series of four articles.<sup>46</sup> She found his diary entries most fascinating and set out to guide her



readers in the footsteps of his hikes and connect for them his many nature observations to her own.

\* \* \*

YuLee Larner and John F. Mehner published the first edition of *Birds of Augusta County [Virginia]* in 1988. The late John Mehner, a biology professor at Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, began his review of the study of birds in that county with Murrill's *Natural History*: "the earliest account."<sup>47</sup>

Many of Murrill's entries in his diary indicate sensitivity to the natural environment. He saw connecting links between science and literature and one chapter of *The Natural History of Staunton, Virginia* is composed of quotations on nature from American and British writers.<sup>48</sup>

\* \* \*

In 1995 Annie Dillard published *Mornings Like This, Found Poems*. Her section entitled "A Natural History of Getting Through the Year" consists of three entries from Murrill's *Natural History*:

NOVEMBER 1, 1895

The mountains are on fire  
And everything is dry; insects gone.  
My private work this year will be:  
Biology, Bible, Art, Geology, Body,  
Literature. This term will be devoted  
To Art, Zoology, Bibles, Epics, Dramas,  
Etc. I find the Entomostraca interesting.

JANUARY 24, 1896

I spent most of the day  
Mounting butterflies from India.  
This finishes all the flies for this year  
Until more are caught.  
Poisoned plants at night.  
Very warm. The brightest,  
Warmest January I remember.

PLAN OF NATURE STUDY FOR APRIL

Birds and flowers will keep one busy.  
Make collections of both, and observe





The battles and songs of birds. Watch  
For the eggs of Phoebe about the middle  
Of the month. Study the circulation  
Of blood in a frog's foot.  
Take up mental hygiene;  
Because it is much needed now.<sup>49</sup>

\* \* \*

David W. Johnston mentions Murrill three times in his 2003 *The History of Ornithology in Virginia*.<sup>50</sup> In his "Local Lists" section Johnston mentions Murrill's *Natural History* and refers to it as "Detailed natural history accounts of eighty-eight species from 1895-1897."<sup>51</sup>

In the section "Modern Centers of Bird Study" of his chapter "The Twentieth Century and Beyond" Johnston lists Murrill as the first of eight individuals, the Augusta Bird Club and "others" in his "Augusta County and Staunton" paragraph:

"In 1893 William A. Murrill, a teacher at Wesleyan Female Institute, began keeping natural history records from the Staunton area, and in his accounts of eighty-seven [sic] birds he mentions two rarities, the Snowy Owl and Sandhill Crane."<sup>52</sup>

With regard to the passenger pigeon in his chapter "Extirpated and Nonnative Birds" Johnston relies completely on an article Murrill published in 1949.<sup>53</sup>

\* \* \*

The years 2002 and 2003 were when David Rose and James Kimbrough published a pair of excellent, thorough, readable articles on Murrill in *Mushroom, the Journal of Wild Mushrooming*.<sup>54</sup> Both authors show great appreciation for the man not only as a world-renowned mycologist but also a very interesting man of many talents, energy, and accomplishments. "William Alphonso Murrill stands at the beginning of twentieth century mycology as a seminal figure."<sup>55</sup>

Rose and Kimbrough have done more research in more resources and made more contacts than any other authors. They treat Murrill's life from family to finish and have produced to date the most thorough description of his career. The authors have searched out and *Mushroom* has included many informative and interesting photographs. The pair of articles is full of the details of Murrill's professional accomplishments, contacts, and travels.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Mycology is the branch of biology dealing with fungi.

<sup>2</sup>William Alphonso Murrill, *Autobiography* (n.p., 1945), 5-6. Murrill says he began his autobiography October 20, 1944 and finished that year on November 4. Murrill, *Autobiography*, 4. In this source Murrill includes a great deal of information all of which we have tried to verify.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 6-8. November 20, 2006, the Virginia Division of Vital Records reported "No record [for William Alphonso Murrill] was found during the period of 1867-1897." Inquiries through The United Methodist Church Lynchburg District Office as well as Bethany, Lane Memorial, and Mount Hermon Methodist churches in Campbell County produced no baptismal records. None of these contacts knew the farm name either as "Pammell" or a suggested variant, "Pannell."

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 15-16. The Registrar's Office and the Special Collections at V.P.I. report no records prior to 1897.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 19. Among the richness of materials YuLee Larner collected in her research of the late 1970s and early 1980s is the cover letter for and the photocopy of the matriculation book dated September 1889 [!] showing entry number 31 in Murrill's own hand: "Willie Alfonso [!] Murrill Oct 13 1869 S.L. Murrill Blacksburg Va."

<sup>9</sup>Richard Irby, *History of Randolph Macon College* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1898), 307.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.* Murrill is number 6 in the photograph of the Class of 1890.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>12</sup>Murrill, *Autobiography*, 19-23.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 26-27.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.* "Music at the Fair" (*Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 5, 1893, 12) reported the August 4 concert during which "Miss Maude [!] Powell...performed the only foreign composition." The same article reported that "the Exposition Orchestra, under the direction of Theodore Thomas, will give a popular concert" at 3 o'clock on August 5. "Honor Virginia Day" (*Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 10, 1893, 3) reported on the festivity of August 9 during which "United States Senator John W. Daniel of Virginia was the orator of the day." Attention by Murrill to events and the personalities associated with them is typical of his writings. He was a collector who kept notebooks and included quotations of poetry in his *Natural History* and *Autobiography*. It is the written version of the many scrapbooks he kept. (Murrill, *Autobiography*, 155)

<sup>19</sup>YuLee Larner obtained a photocopy of the *45th Annual Announcement. Wesleyan Female Institute, Staunton, Virginia* which is currently in the collections of the Augusta County Historical Society. Murrill is listed in the "Literary Department" on page 4 as "Prof. W. Alphonso Murrill, B.S., A.M. Mathematics and Natural Science." Edna Lee Luttrell is not listed among the students for 1892-93. Her name will appear in The Register of Students in the 1895-96 Catalogue as noted later in Part Three of this article. The "Course of Study" section devoted to the "School of Natural Science" takes a full page to describe the intent of this study and the required textbooks: "We wish to make Science clear instead of popular...Mental training is our object...[courses lead] gradually from the concrete to the abstract. Our work is largely with the individual and she is taught to observe, describe, compare and understand the every-day phenomena of Nature. Instruction is given by textbooks, lectures and experiments. Laboratory work and Field work are required...and small collections are made of the minerals, plants, insects, &c., in easy reach of the Institute."

<sup>20</sup>William Alphonso Murrill, *The Natural History of Staunton, Virginia* (New York, 1919), 1.

<sup>21</sup>YuLee Larner has determined the current locations of the places Murrill mentioned:

<u>Murrill's Place Name</u>	<u>Current Location</u>
Wesleyan Female Institute	Johnson St. between Fayette St. & Madison Pl.
Dogwood Hill	The hill where the cave is located
Sears Hill	Present Hampton St. and surrounding streets
Star Woods	Adjoining Sears Hill
Bloodroot Woods	The farther end of Star Woods
Daisy Dell	Bessie Weller School area
Betsy Bell	Betsy Bell Park



Peck's Woods  
Fern Woods  
Peck's Spring  
Resting Spring  
Lily Spring  
Buttermilk Spring  
Cabbage Spring  
Plunkettsville  
Chestnut Woods  
The Cemetery  
The Park  
Park Woods  
Virginia School for the D & D

Montgomery Hall Park  
To the right [west] of Peck's Woods  
On the left [south] of railroad beyond Peck's yard  
First spring to the right [northwest] beyond Peck's Spring  
Second spring to the right [west] beyond Peck's Spring  
Covered spring to right [north] of railroad  
To the right [northwest] of Buttermilk Spring  
Straith St. and surrounding area  
Beyond Plunkettsville to the right [east]  
Thornrose Cemetery  
Gypsy Hill Park  
The woods beyond [north of] the Park  
Virginia School for the D & B

<sup>22</sup>Norman P. Rowe personal communication.

<sup>23</sup>Murrill, *Natural History*, 7.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 28-29.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 183. Murrill was very musical all his life. He loved playing piano and singing. In April of 1982, YuLee Larner obtained with the help of Maxene Hamilton, University Archives, University Libraries, University of Florida, photocopies of six of the eight Murrill songs in their collection. These songs were published in 1941.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>38</sup>Murrill wrote in "The University of Virginia" section of the Staunton chapter of his *Autobiography* (36-37) "The Naturalist frequently utilized his spare Mondays during the winter, when there was little opportunity to collect, by going over to Charlottesville and attending lectures....The Medical Department of the University was very famous, and here the Naturalist spent most of his time, hearing lectures, watching demonstrations, and helping the students work on the 'stiffs' in various stages of dissection....The Museum of Zoology was a source of much inspiration to the Naturalist and his classes in Zoology and Geology; while the wonderful McCormick Observatory with its giant telescope, which opened up myriads of new worlds to the eye and the imagination, left nothing even to hope for in the scientific way. The midnight hours spent with his Astronomy pupils beside the telescope on the hill west of Charlottesville could never be forgotten." Despite several visits to several university collections in Charlottesville, none mentions such activities of non-students like Murrill.

<sup>39</sup>The *Catalogue, 1895-96, Announcements, 1896-7., Wesleyan Female Institute, Staunton, Virginia* at the Virginia State Library in Richmond lists on page 8 in the Register of Students:

STUDENT	PARENT OR GUARDIAN	STATE
Luttrell, Edna Lee	Dr.. S.S. Luttrell	Virginia

The marriage record is on Reel 16 of the Virginia Bureau of Vital Statistics, marriage registry Fairfax County, 1853-1935:

144 Fairfax County

145

50 Sep 1	Falls Ch	Wm Alphonso Murrill	Edna L. Luttrell w
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**Place of Birth**

<b>husb</b>	<b>wife</b>	<b>husb</b>	<b>wife</b>
27	20	single	single
		Campbell Co Va,	Wash Co Tenn

**Place of Res**

<b>Husb</b>	<b>wife</b>	<b>husb</b>	<b>wife</b>
Montg Co Va	Fairfax Co Va	Saml L & VD	Drr, SS & Maggie

**Occ Husb**

Teacher

**Performer**

J. Wawood Wells



<sup>40</sup>Murrill writes on page 61 of his *Autobiography* he was first interested in graduate studies at The Johns Hopkins University: "Zoology under Brooks, with a minor in Botany under Lotsy and one in chemistry under Remsen. Dr. Gildersleve, a friend of the family, secured him a fellowship. For a year or two he worked along the lines suggested by Humphrey and Lotsy, so as to make the minor in botany easier. He had already done considerable work in Chemistry and used Remsen's book in teaching." James Simpert, Archivist (Arts and Sciences) at the Milton S. Eisenhower Library at Johns Hopkins, could find no record of any fellowship offer nor correspondence between Murrill and any of the faculty he mentions.

<sup>41</sup>Murrill's dissertation is one of a very few by Cornell graduates at that time presented in published form: *Annals of Botany*, vol. XIV, no. LVI (December, 1900): 583-607 & plates XXXI and XXXII.

<sup>42</sup>Two of the three year books for the years Murrill taught at DeWitt Clinton list him as a faculty member.

<sup>43</sup>David Rose, "William Alphonso Murrill: The Legend of the Naturalist," *Mushroom, The Journal of Wild Mushrooming*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Winter, 2003): 3. Mr. Rose's unpublished Murrill chronology for 1920 shows "Am Phytopathological Society conf, Staunton, VA." Local coverage of the American Society of Plant Pathologists occurred in articles of *The Staunton News Leader*, (August 3, 1920): 1 and (August 4, 1920): 2. "A History of Plant Pathology in Virginia: The Fromme Era (1915-1928)" available in the University Archives of Virginia Tech at <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/arc/ppws/fromme.htm> mentions on page 26 that "the Advisory Board of American Plant Pathologists...voted to hold a summer field meeting...[ which] convened August 3, at Staunton Va..." There is no list of participants in this source. Paul Peterson, Historian of the American Phytopathological Society, requested a search of the records of the APS which are deposited at Iowa State University. This search revealed no 1920 meeting of APS in Staunton.

<sup>44</sup>Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, (New York: Harper, 2007), 244.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>46</sup>*The Sunday News Leader* (February 4, March 4, April 1, & May 20, 1979).

<sup>47</sup>YuLee Lerner and John F. Mehner, *Birds of Augusta County* (Verona, Va.: Mid-Valley Press, 1988), 5.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>49</sup>Annie Dillard, *Mornings like This, Found Poems* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 54-55. These selections are from Murrill's *Natural History*, 55, 62, and 28-29.

<sup>50</sup>David W. Johnston, *The History of Ornithology in Virginia* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003), <sup>51</sup>Murrill did not make the index! *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 131 and note 3, p. 208. Murrill's article ["Disease a Factor in the Extinction of the Passenger Pigeon", *Virginia Wildlife*, Vol. X, no. 2 (February, 1949):10-11] is of wider interest as he mentions 1880 as the last time he shot passenger pigeons and reviews written and personal sources he used to come to his position.

<sup>54</sup>David Rose, "William Alphonso Murrill: The Legend of the Naturalist," *Mushroom, the Journal of Wild Mushrooming*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Winter, 2002): 1-4; James W. Kimbrough, "The Twilight Years of William Alphonso Murrill," *Mushroom, The Journal of Wild Mushrooming*, vol.21, no. 3 ( Summer, 2003): 1-7.

<sup>55</sup>David Rose, "William Alphonso Murrill," 1.



# The quest for a higher ideal: Abolition or saving the union? The debate over the great Compromise of 1850 by Daniel A. Métraux

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Anybody familiar with Edward Ayer's recent book *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: The Civil War in the Heart of America*<sup>1</sup> will remember the intense debate among residents of Staunton and Augusta County in Virginia in 1860 and early 1861 over whether Virginia should stay with the Union or join the newly formed Confederate States of America. When Virginia called a state convention in the spring of 1861 to decide the issue, Staunton and Augusta County elected delegates who favored remaining a part of the United States, but their feelings turned abruptly during the convention when President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to fight the Confederacy right after the fall of Fort Sumter in mid-April 1861. The convention then quickly called for Virginia's secession.

Virginia's decision to leave the Union was part of the culmination of a long debate over whether the United States would remain one nation or become two. There were many issues including the role of the federal government vis-à-vis states' rights and whether or not the institution of slavery should be maintained. Those issues had been debated since the writing of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, but had been effectively shelved due to a huge national divide on the issue of slavery. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 and other expedient political measures were taken to paper over this divide and to preserve the Union, but the acquisition of Texas, California, and what is now the American Southwest during the Mexican War in the late 1840s made the United States a truly continental nation with a huge amount of empty space. Many in the North wanted to forbid the expansion of slavery and slave culture into the West while others in the South, faced with increasingly depleted soil, saw salvation in the western expansion of their plantation system.



Moderate political figures such as Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster (1782-1852) sought yet another political solution to the growing crisis with the Compromise of 1850.<sup>2</sup> Webster, together with Senators Henry Clay (1777-1852) and Stephen Douglas (1813-1861), worked to find a compromise concerning the sectional disputes that many rightly feared would lead to a collapse of the Union and civil war. These moderate Democrats, while themselves abhorring slavery, saw abolitionists as dangerous fanatics. They made a point of adhering to the Jacksonian principles of states' rights and limited power to the federal government, a stance that tended to shield the South's peculiar institution.<sup>3</sup> Webster infuriated many abolitionists in the North with his famous Senate speech of 7 March 1850 when he characterized himself "not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a Northern man but as an American...I speak today for the preservation of the Union. 'Hear me for my cause.'" His efforts helped pave the way for the compromise which included the highly controversial Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.

The big questions centered on the abolitionists' demands for immediate emancipation and the demands of other moderates that slavery not be permitted to expand beyond its original boundaries in the South. Demanding emancipation and actually getting the desired result, however, seemed like a nearly impossible task for the abolitionists in the early 1850s. Historian Debby Applegate, who won the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for biography with her study of the life of Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887)<sup>4</sup>, notes that there were in essence two primary obstacles to the emancipation of America's three million slaves: the Constitution and the Bible. Applegate writes:

Surely, one might protest, both the Bill of Rights and the Golden Rule establish revolutionary democratic principles that prohibit slavery: equality under the law and equality under God. But the Sermon on the Mount and the Bill of Rights were manifestos, not covenants and contracts. The devil, they say, is in the details.

The apostles of Christ and the founding fathers of the Republic were pragmatic revolutionaries. Few converts would be won by calling for the wholesale destruction of old social institutions, no matter how inequitable. Instead they found more success applying Christian and democratic principles to improve and regulate the social institutions that already existed—including slavery. Neither the Constitution nor the Bible required slavery to exist, and neither explicitly endorsed slavery as a social good. But both documents enshrined slavery as a normal, legal, even godly, fact of life.





In the Constitution slavery is subtly but deeply entrenched. The founding fathers explicitly recognized the legal status of slaves, describing them as “three-fifths of all other Persons,” for the purpose of allotting congressional representatives.... Article Four, section two, requires that all persons “held to Service or Labor in one state, under Laws thereof, escaping to another” — that is, runaway slaves, — must be returned to their owners. If individual states wished to abolish slavery they could, but the federal government could do nothing without amending the Constitution by national consensus.

Slavery figures far more prominently in the Bible...At no point does the Bible explicitly call for the abolition of slavery or for the exclusion of slaveholders from the church, even in the most egalitarian teachings of the New Testament.<sup>5</sup>

Much of the debate was between Christian ministers in the North and South and the pulpit became an important vehicle to sound the debate between the abolitionists, the moderates who would put up with slavery to save the union, and ministers who used the Bible to justify slavery. Ministers like Henry Ward Beecher, who started out as a moderate, but who later became a strong abolitionist, wrote an amazing number of articles, tracts, and even longer books to disseminate their views. Fortunately, many of these tracts survive, enabling the modern day reader to get a clear view of the passionate debate that dominated the first six decades of the nineteenth century.

One of the best examples of the debate between moderates and abolitionists occurred in 1850 between two ministers, the Rev. Moses Stuart (1780-1852) and the Rev. Rufus Wheelwright Clark (1813-1886), with Stuart playing the role of the moderate and Clark writing for the abolitionists. Stuart, born in Wilton, Connecticut, was a 1799 honors graduate of Yale University who was pastor of a Congregational Church in New Haven before being appointed in 1810 a professor of sacred literature at Andover Theological Seminary in Newton, just outside of Boston. Stuart achieved scholarly fame as a teacher and text writer of Hebrew. Clark was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts, and graduated from Yale in 1838. He was pastor of the North Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire in the late 1840s and early 1850s before moving on to pastor positions in East Boston, Brooklyn, and Albany, New York. To these two voices we will add the views of a small Virginian newspaper, *The Staunton Spectator and General Advertiser*, which in late 1850 published many editorials and letters to the editor in support of the Great Compromise and which went out of its way to criticize bitterly not only abolitionists like Clark, but southern secessionists as well.



Stuart wrote his 103-page book, *Conscience and the Constitution with remarks on the recent speech of the Hon. Daniel Webster in the Senate of the United States on the subject of Slavery* (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1850) which triggered a response later the same year by Rufus Clark: *Review of the Rev. Moses Stuart's Pamphlet on Slavery, entitled Conscience and the Constitution* (Boston: C.C. P. Moody, 1850).

The goal of this paper is to look at the very different approaches these two ministers took on the questions of slavery and emancipation and to use them as symbols of the much bigger fight brewing between abolitionists and those who either supported or condoned slavery, a struggle that became one of the key causes of the Civil War only a decade later. The voice of the *Staunton Spectator* is added to include a moderate Southern voice to the debate.

The moderate ministers and politicians generally disapproved of slavery, but refused to take immediate action to eradicate it because of the many problems they thought it would cause including the probable breakup of the country. Generally, they supported the creation of "colonization lists" of blacks who would be sent to Liberia and elsewhere in Africa. They saw the long-term answer to America's slave problem was to send the blacks back to Africa. They were also gradualists who opposed the immediate end of slavery. They felt that slavery would gradually disappear with the evolution of modern industry and the slow devolution of the plantation economy. While they saw the injustices evident in slavery, they were hesitant to label the institution itself or individual slaveholders as categorically sinful. But above all they refused programs that would shatter the fragile unity of the American nation.

Moses Stuart of Andover Academy, like many of his contemporary moderates, condemned slavery in his tract, "Conscience and the Constitution with Remarks on the Recent Speech of the Hon. Daniel Webster on the Subject of Slavery," but he didn't develop that point much. Stuart, like Webster, was first and foremost a staunch "Unionist" who, fearing the dissolution of the country, refused to advocate immediate emancipation. Indeed, he argued in his tract that "universal and immediate emancipation would be little short of insanity." He talked about a plan for very gradual emancipation to begin at some unspecified date in the future and of "colonizing" the blacks, moving them, like a number of Indian tribes under Andrew



Jackson, to their own territory somewhere out west where they would have their own territory and government. Giving a number of examples of dutiful slaves who obediently served their masters in the Bible, Stuart declared that white Christians lacked the authority to “unmake” slaves while slaves themselves had to follow the Biblical tradition of slaves who revered and supported their owners.

Stuart maintained a strong anti-abolitionist stance at Andover Seminary, even prohibiting his students from attending an abolitionist lecture. His essay *Conscience and the Constitution*, written in defense of Senator Webster’s famous speech, is also a detailed Scriptural defense of slavery. He also strongly supported the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, as did another professor at the Andover Seminary, Leonard Woods, who went so far as to support slavery, arguing that it was a divinely sanctioned institution. Woods and many of his colleagues even launched a petition drive at the time to persuade fellow ministers to support the compromise. They urged fellow ministers to stamp out anti-slavery agitation in their communities and to work openly against anti-slavery clergy.<sup>6</sup>

It is unclear whether Stuart worked hand-in-hand with Woods, but he was deeply concerned over the stability of American society should emancipation come abruptly. He also feared armed insurrection, the mass murder of whites, a collapse of civil order and even total anarchy if immediate emancipation were to occur:

What now if the Union be severed, and a civil war ensues, (as it certainly will in case of severance), and the blacks everywhere have arms put into their hands, and are encouraged to revolt? What must become of all those places where the colored population constitute by far the greater portion of the community? Think of St. Domingo, of Guiana, of Northampton county in Virginia, and other places. But no; I cannot think of these without disturbing my peace. Would God, that all my countrymen were free from all danger, even the most distant, of such scenes as were there enacted?<sup>7</sup>

Stuart fancied himself a strong supporter of the Constitution, which, he reminds his readers, explicitly gives the sovereign states the right to determine whether or not slavery is to occur within their boundaries:

All this shows the dominant feeling, at the South as well as the North, on the subject of slavery at that time, viz., the feeling of



repugnance. Moreover, it is a correct index of the then dominant state of feeling, as we shall see further on. But allowing all that has now been said, still, could not the States mutually bind themselves to the compact before us? Surely they could. We must begin the examination of this subject by calling to mind, that each State was, and still is, a sovereignty within itself. Then, it was absolutely and entirely so; but now, in a more modified and limited manner, since it has assigned over a part of its sovereignty-rights to the General Government.<sup>8</sup>

Responding to claims by abolitionists that it is the moral duty of all Christians to intervene to remove the stain and sins of slavery, Stuart responded by noting that Jesus himself did nothing to interfere with slavery in his day:

Christ purposely and carefully abstained from meddling with those matters which belonged to the civil power. Slavery was one of these . . . He [Christ] doubtless felt that slavery might be made a very tolerable condition, nay, even a blessing to such as were shiftless and helpless, in case of kind and gentle mastership.<sup>9</sup>

Stuart also went out of his way to defend Daniel Webster who he said deserved to be treated as a national hero, but who was strongly denounced by the “Free-Soilers” for his alleged “capitulation” to the pro-slave elements. Webster, Stuart reminds us, detested slavery as much as any man, but saw the salvation of the Union as being more important and a greater good:

Did Mr. Webster vote in any case whatever, for the extension of slavery, or of slave Territory? NEVER. Will he so vote? NEVER, SO long as he is Daniel Webster. Did he ever vote to make a war of conquest, in order to extend slavery-ground? NEVER. Did he not contend to the last against Texas union and Texas contracts? He surely did. Has he lost any of his feeling of repugnance and opposition to slavery? NOT IN THE LEAST. It has been strengthened by all that he has lately seen and heard; and with good reason. Is there a man in the United States Senate, who has a more deep, solid, lasting, unchangeable dislike of slavery and all its attendant evils? NOT ONE. There are many men who make much more noise about it, and labor to turn the world upside down in order to throw it off; but not one of such, I venture to say, has so deep, steadfast, and immutable a dislike to it and disapprobation of it, as he. What has he done, then? He has declared, that bitter as the task may be, to allow of new slavery States, still he must lift up his hand to carry solemn contracts into execution, to keep the plighted faith of this nation. There is- there can be no repudiating of such contracts. Even a bad bargain must be kept. If not, who after this can ever trust to the faith or honor of this nation?<sup>10</sup>



Stuart ended his tract with a call for colonization whereby slavery would be ended by sending blacks back to Africa. In this manner the slavery crisis could be eliminated without the need to challenge the South or the southern institution of slave holding, and the Union would remain intact.

Rufus Clark, writing in nearby Portsmouth, took the moral high ground. He looked back at American history, to the nation's claims that it is the seat of liberty, democracy, and equality. How can this be, he asks, when at the same time three million of the nation's residents are held in chains without an ounce of liberty? In previous decades the loosely structured abolitionist movement had regarded the institution of slavery as primarily a constitutional issue, but evangelical activists like Clark reframed the question into a matter of personal morality. These abolitionist evangelicals determined that if churches declared slaveholding to be a sin and if unrepentant slaveholders were barred from spiritual communion and from participation in respectable Christian society, could they not be shamed into freeing their slaves, thus avoiding a political crisis?<sup>11</sup>

Clark tried to look at what he regarded as the hypocrisy of American slavery. He felt that America was the most devoutly Christian and enlightened nation in the world, and yet it was shamed by having one of the most barbaric forms of slavery on earth.<sup>12</sup> Clark urged his readers to reinterpret the Bible, putting more emphasis on the spirit of Christ than on actual passages that may or may not condone slavery. "Can we for a moment suppose that our blessed Savior, whose heart beat with sympathy with every form of human suffering, who was so ready to heal the sick, afford consolation to the poor, and comfort to the afflicted, who was moved to tears while standing at the grave of a friend, could look upon this horrible system with any other feelings than those of the keenest sorrow and deepest abhorrence?"<sup>13</sup>

Clark took special offense with the new Fugitive Slave Law. He was horror-stricken by the dilemma that he faced—there is the higher law of God which demands that every life has dignity and that all people should have a free and happy life, a clause clearly embedded in the nation's Declaration of Independence. If he were to meet a fugitive slave, God's law says that he should help that man escape to his freedom, but in the eyes of American law, anybody helping the fugitive became a criminal himself:



However long the fugitive may have resided among us, and wherever he may be found, whether engaged in an honorable occupation, or seated at his fire-side surrounded by an affectionate family, or worshipping God in the sanctuary, or partaking of the emblems of the body and blood of his Savior, he may be seized, and his minister and fellow Christians be commanded to fasten the chains upon him, and drag him back to the degradation and horrors of Southern slavery. Will the American people submit to such unparallel tyranny? Have we all become so debased, so weak, so timid, as to yield to such a bondage?<sup>14</sup>

Clark questioned the very constitutionality of this law, noting that each state was supposed to determine the status of its own residents. But “Under this atrocious law there are no free States. There is not a freeman in the land — we are all bound to work for the slaveholder. If he requires our services, we are commanded to render them, under pain of the severest penalties.”<sup>15</sup>

Clark chided supporters of the 1850 Compromise for their very apparent hypocrisy. “What a spectacle for American citizens to exhibit before the civilized world! With all our boasted freedom, our Protestant churches, our numerous and excellent schools, our Bible Societies, Tract Societies, Missionary Societies, and our sympathy for the oppressed of other lands, the twenty millions of American freemen turned Slave-catchers!! We, model republicans! Rather model hypocrites.”<sup>16</sup>

Throughout his over one hundred page tract Clark made a combined attack on both the Biblical and Constitutional justifications for slavery. He constantly demanded adherence to a higher law, the word of God, who smiled down on all people with equal love and devotion and who could not possibly countenance the mistreatment of one person by another. He also looked at the political ideals of the United States and found it “hypocritical” (one of his favorite words) for Americans to support oppressed peoples abroad while keeping three million of its own citizens in chains:

MR. WEBSTER and MR. STUART appear before us, as professed pacificators in the fiery conflict of opinion which is raging. They come with their Constitutional and Bible arguments, confident that their words will hush the storm, and reconcile the hostile parties. But this agitation is the natural and inevitable result of the genius of Our institutions. While we are educating so many thousands of thinking men and women, with consciences; while our sympathies are so often called forth in behalf of the oppressed and suffering of other





nations, while we are moved by appeals to send the blessed Gospel to the millions who are dwelling in darkness, we cannot but be keenly alive to the injustice, the inhumanity of American slavery. We cannot educate our sensibilities to feel for one form of oppression, and not for another. We cannot have hearts that throb with intense sympathy for the struggling Hungarians, the oppressed Poles, the vanquished Greeks, and yet remain unmoved under the spectacle of three millions of our own citizens, laboring to rend asunder their chains. We cannot heap execrations upon the Emperors of Russia and Austria, and weep over the misfortunes of Kossuth, and yet have no pity for the panting fugitive in our own land, whose only crime is, a desire to be free.

Scheming politicians may succeed in this, but the mass of the people cannot. They are unable to reach such a depth of hypocrisy, as to regulate the exercise of their humanity by the locality of the suffering or oppression, and be full of emotion, and overwhelmed with indignation for wrongs committed at a distance, and ice-hearted under scenes of distress that are at our own door. Nor will compromise bills, speeches on the Constitution, or a labored exegesis of scriptural authorities upon slavery, produce this result. There is not a statesman or professor in the land, who has adroitness and power enough, to give this tone to the humanity and conscience of these Northern States. Neither is there one who has sufficient skill to solve the problem, as to how we shall keep slavery in the bosom of the intelligence, and light, and liberty, and Christianity of this nation, *and make it lie there quietly*; how we shall enable two such diametrically opposing elements as American slavery and American liberty, to harmonize and dwell together peaceably.

Stop the tide of intelligence that is flowing from our systems of education -extinguish the light of the Gospel, that shines with such intensity upon the community from the American pulpit, subject humane, noble-hearted editors to an Austrian censorship, annihilate three-quarters of our literature, which is so thoroughly pervaded with the spirit of universal liberty, and then will a calm spread over this nation, such as reigns over the Dead Sea. Then, and not till then, can the slave-dealer listen to the music of clanking chains, with none to disturb the serenity of his mind....<sup>17</sup>

Clark felt that unless the Fugitive Slave Law was repealed and slaves were emancipated, an angry God would punish this country severely:

Politicians tell us, indeed, that the slavery questions are settled. *Settled?* As well they might tell us that the controversy that God has with the apostate world is settled. As well might they strive to convince us that the struggle between good and evil, Christianity and heathenism, liberty and despotism, heaven and hell, are settled. This [fugitive slave] bill will arouse and excite this nation, as it has never been aroused or excited before. Already, in the meetings that are being held, and the expressions of indignation that come to us through the press, do we hear the deep murmurings of the approaching storm; a storm that will try the hearts of men, and shake



this republic to the centre. "I tremble for my country when I remember that God is just," and I tremble at the indications that the day is near at hand, when we must account to the Great Judge for the guilt of so long retaining, in so favored a nation, this system of slavery.<sup>18</sup>

The differences between Stuart and Clark were insoluble for there was no middle ground on which they could agree. They were talking at each other, not with each other, and they took stands that were diametrically opposed. If their debate had been over various minor issues it might not have mattered, but they were discussing the very fate of the nation. Would it remain one nation with two very different cultures, would one side triumph over the other, or would the Union collapse? Today we know the outcome and there seems a natural progression of events that led to the end of slavery and the start of what has become a highly multiracial and multicultural society.

### **The View from Staunton Virginia**

The views of the editors and many of the readers of the *Staunton Spectator* in late 1850 reflect a clear Unionist stance as well as strong support for the newly adopted Fugitive Slave Law. There is general disgust with extremists on both sides, abolitionists in the North and a growing number of secessionists in the deep South, who were threatening to blow the Union apart. The United States was a cherished union of thirty-one states who when together made a strong and wealthy nation, but if blown apart into groups of smaller states would be most pitiful in their wretched weak poverty. "Nature does not abhor a vacuum more than the people of the United States dread a separation. They see nothing less than inevitable ruin in such a catastrophe."<sup>19</sup>

The *Spectator* compared the stability and sustainability of the United States to that of the solar system. "The secession of one or two planets from the heavens would not more certainly throw the solar system into fatal disorder than the secession of several states would overwhelm this confederacy, and plunge our whole population into despair...." <sup>20</sup> The authority of the Constitution and the glue that holds the Union together must be adhered to at all cost.

The future of the Union, however, depended greatly on the attitudes of the North. If the people of the North respected the laws of



the land, including the Fugitive Slave Law, then the Union would be preserved. "The issue of union or disunion is now virtuously to be decided by the North. If the Union is dissolved it will be by the agitation and lawless conduct of Northern fanatics. If it is to be sustained, Northern men must arouse themselves to the task. Movements North and South [in support of the Constitution] indicate that the Constitution, like a tree which shaken by the wind penetrates deeper into the earth, is taking faster hold on the hearts of the mass of the people — and will bear up or be borne up bravely against all the assaults of fanatics and malcontents."<sup>21</sup> To support its point, the *Spectator* quoted a letter from New Jersey Senator Philemon Dickenson: "The friends of the Union have a high holy duty to discharge, and they should embrace every opportunity to confer together, to strengthen each other's hands, and to devise means for more effectively driving beyond the borders of our Heaven-favored confederacy the demon spirit of disunion."<sup>22</sup>

The *Spectator* called for support of the Fugitive Slave Law, which was essential not only to assuage the feelings of Southerners, but also important in allowing them to retain their essential "property"—the slaves who had fled to the North. The paper expressed anger and scorn at those in the North, especially ministers and priests like Clark who spoke for the abolitionists:

Reverent gentlemen make eloquent speeches against the law, pronouncing it void of morality and deciding that they will go to the penitentiary rather than obey it. These zealous candidates for martyrdom entirely overlook the example of the Apostle who returned a fugitive to his master....There is no difference in opinion in the South on this matter and the people of the North will have to decide among themselves, among adherents to the Constitution on the one hand, and those who refuse to obey the law, on the other. The Act was passed in pursuance of the Constitution.....<sup>23</sup>

Often times the question itself might seem too big to encapsulate into one body of literature, but when we look at Clark and Stuart as well as the editors and readers of the *Staunton Spectator* trying to define their respective positions, we can grasp a better understanding of our nation's great divide in 1850. The middle ground was held by a broad range of politicians, journalists, and some clergy who may have had different opinions on slavery — Daniel Webster personally abhorred



slavery, but was willing to live with it to preserve the union while the editors of the *Staunton Spectator* supported slavery, but also saw great value in protecting the Union. Extremists in the South were already talking of secession, but they would be denounced by many in Staunton and elsewhere in Virginia until President Lincoln's call for volunteers in April 1861. Abolitionists in the North remained a small but growing minority in the North even through the 1860 presidential campaign, when the Republican party turned its back on the followers of Senator Seward and instead nominated the more moderate Lincoln.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Edward L. Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: The Civil War in the Heart of America* (New York: Norton & Co., 2004).

<sup>2</sup>The Compromise of 1850 was a package of five laws that sought to solve territorial and slavery controversies arising from the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) by balancing the interests of free and slave states. California was admitted as a free state while Texas was awarded financial compensation for giving up claims to land to its west in what is now New Mexico. The territory of New Mexico (now the states of Arizona and New Mexico) was organized without any specific prohibition of slavery. The slave trade (but not slavery itself) was abolished in Washington DC and the Fugitive Slave Law, requiring all US citizens to assist in the return of runaway slaves, was passed

<sup>3</sup>Peter Wallner, *Franklin Pierce: Martyr for the Union* (Concord NH: Plaidswede Publishing, 2007), xii.

<sup>4</sup>Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: Doubleday, 2006).

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 112-113

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>7</sup>Moses Stuart, *Conscience and the Constitution with remarks on the recent speech of the Hon. Daniel Webster in the Senate of the United States on the subject of Slavery* (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1850), 95.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>11</sup>Applegate, 114.

<sup>12</sup>Clark, 29.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>19</sup>The *Staunton Spectator and General Advertiser* (hereafter SSGA), 27 November 1850, 2

<sup>20</sup>SSGA, 27 November 1850, 2.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 13 November 1850, 2

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 20 November 1850, 2

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 23 October 1850



# The Tye River and Blue Ridge Turnpike

by Robert P. Kyle

*Robert Kyle, an ACHS member and family historian, has made a speciality of unraveling the secrets of turnpike history. This is the second turnpike article that Kyle has published in the **Bulletin**.*

The Tye River and Blue Ridge Turnpike was an early toll road in Virginia, chartered shortly after the General Assembly enacted the General Turnpike Law in 1817. Although the company which built the turnpike was defunct by 1850, the road survives as twenty-two miles of State Route 56 from Steeles Tavern in Augusta County, east through Vesuvius and up to the Tye River Gap in Rockbridge County, beneath the Blue Ridge Parkway and down the Tye River through Montebello and Tyro to Massie's Mill in Nelson County. Though now paved, the road retains many of the grades, twists, and turns imposed by the topography in 1820.

In 1816, the General Assembly created the Internal Improvement Fund, overseen by the Board of Public Works (BPW),<sup>1</sup> and in 1817, enacted the General Turnpike Law.<sup>2</sup>

The initial concept of the Internal Improvement Fund was that the fund would hold the state's stock in various internal improvement companies and banks, and that the dividends from these companies, along with the premiums from bank charters, would be available for investment. At the time of creation, the fund was valued at \$1.25 million, and generated \$98,000 annually. The dividends from internal improvement companies were overshadowed by the bank dividends, but the total never provided for generous investment by the state until after 1831, when the state took on public debt to finance internal improvements.<sup>3</sup> Between 1815 and 1855, charters<sup>4</sup> were issued for building 647 toll roads, 190 of which became operating companies.<sup>5</sup> Overall, as commercial enterprises, turnpikes were



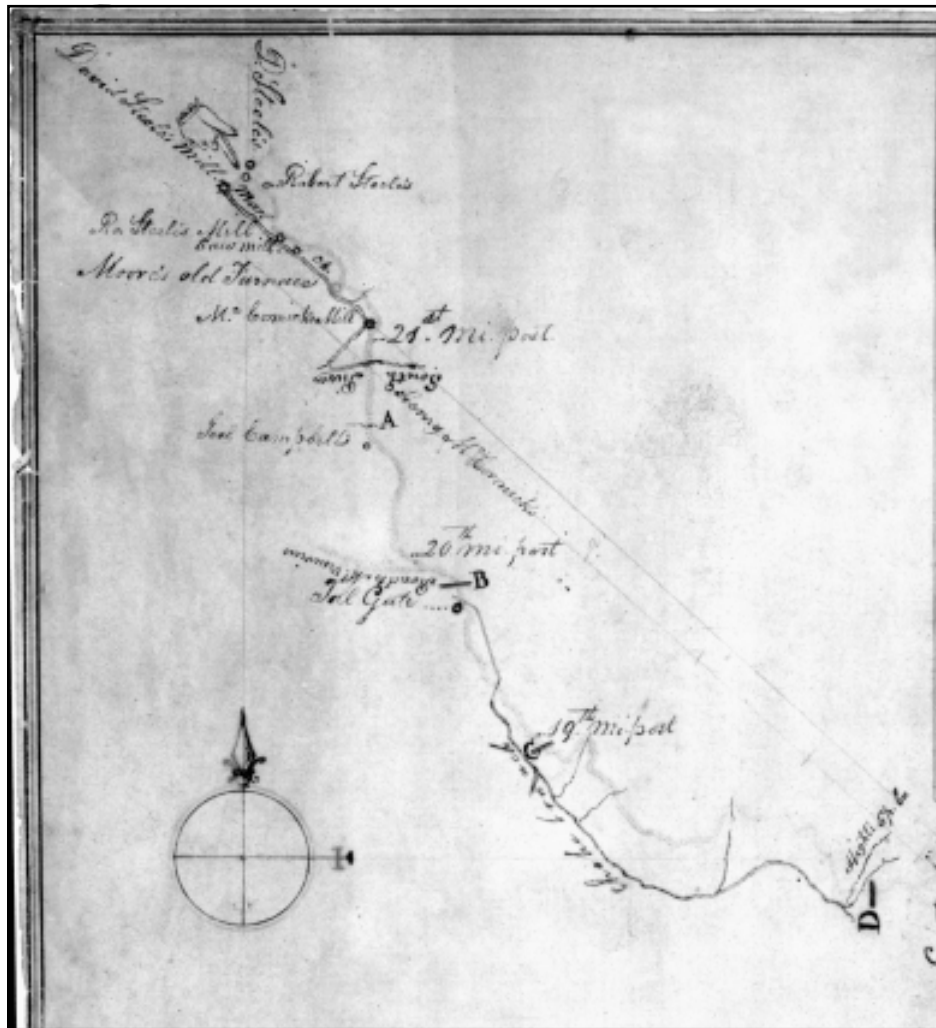
failures. By 1860, only eleven companies had ever managed to pay dividends to shareholders, including the state.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, turnpikes contributed significantly to the transportation infrastructure of Virginia.

But in the early nineteenth century, the more attractive method of transporting freight was by water. The James River was the major artery in Virginia, penetrating from the Atlantic Ocean, past the capital at Richmond, and through the Blue Ridge Mountains. The largest internal improvement project of this era was the James River and Kanawha Canal, which sought to make this waterway navigable and ultimately connect eastern Virginia with the Ohio River.<sup>7</sup> Settlers along the tributaries of the James also sought access to the James. In 1811, citizens from Nelson and Amherst Counties petitioned the General Assembly to allow them to accept subscriptions to open and keep in repair the Tye River as a navigable public “highway.” Among these petitioners were Major Thomas Massie, Sr., a veteran of the Revolutionary War, and his youngest son, William.<sup>8</sup> The General Assembly acceded in 1817, incorporating a company to clear debris, construct canals, and charge tolls from the mouth of the Tye River to an island above Mill Grove, west of Massie’s Mill. Among the trustees empowered to accept subscriptions were Thomas Massie and John Jacobs.<sup>9</sup>

The possibility of access to the James River and its markets downstream via the Tye River was especially attractive to farmers in the Tye River Valley, including the large landowners like Thomas Massie. But it also appealed to farmers further afield across the Blue Ridge Mountains, including those in the upper Shenandoah Valley, in southern Augusta and northern Rockbridge Counties, who would need a road across the mountains. There was no nearby wagon route at this time. This area was midway between Rockfish Gap to the north<sup>10</sup> and White’s Gap to the south. Most commerce moved down the Valley via the better road (often known as the great road, now U.S. 11) to Winchester, destined for the markets at Baltimore and Philadelphia.

Two competing proposals for a road across the mountains emerged as legislative petitions in 1818, although some citizens signed both petitions. One sought a turnpike road from Greenville in Augusta County across the South Mountain at Sink’s Gap and down the north branch of the Tye River (also known as Elk Creek) to its junction with the south branch of the Tye.<sup>11</sup> Its proponents noted that a road had already been built along a portion of this route.<sup>12</sup> The





*Detail of the western terminus, from the 1832 map of the Tye River and Blue Ridge Turnpike made by William A. Hill and forwarded to the Board of Public Works. The route of the road has been digitally enhanced. (Library of Virginia)*

other proposal pleaded for a turnpike from the great road at David Steele's, passing by Moore's Furnace, through what later became the village of Vesuvius, up the waters of the Mary by Hite's field, and down the waters of the south prong of the Tye River to the junction with Elk Creek. This petition specifically noted the efforts to make the Tye River navigable, and emphasized that this route would reduce the distance to the James River at New Market (now Norwood) by twenty miles.<sup>13</sup>

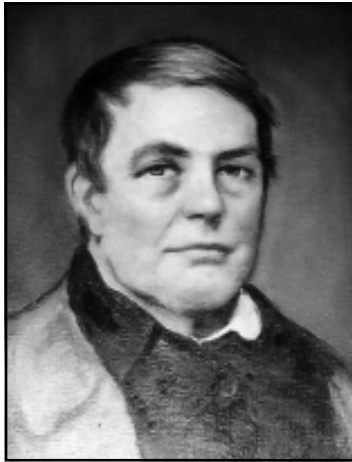


Although both petitions were forwarded to the General Assembly, they were accompanied by a letter from Samuel Finley which described a savvy effort to avoid political stalemate. Proponents of both routes had appointed a committee of nine, and agreed to abide by the majority vote of that committee regarding the route. The committee unanimously endorsed the route beginning at David Steele's.<sup>14</sup> Finley gave this recommendation added credibility by noting that as a resident of Greenville, the route from that village would have benefited him personally, but he was supporting the committee's position.

Accordingly, although the original bill would have appointed commissioners to view both routes and return a recommendation to the General Assembly,<sup>15</sup> the legislation was amended to incorporate the Tye River and Blue Ridge Turnpike Company (TRBR), and to delete any mention of the Greenville route.<sup>16</sup> Two days later the bill was enacted. David Steele, John Steele, and Robert McCormick were authorized to receive stock subscriptions at Steele's; Thomas Jackson, John B. Christian, and Samuel Finley at Greenville; and Thomas Massie, Sr., John Jacobs, and Charles Jones at Massie's Mill.<sup>17</sup> No state investment was authorized at this time.

The capitalization authorized by the General Assembly for TRBR was \$6,000. The earliest surviving list of the charter shareholders was submitted to the Board of Public Works in 1831, reflecting that seventy-two shares, representing \$3,600, were subscribed. As might be expected, John Jacobs (sixteen shares) and Major Thomas Massie, Sr. (two shares), promoters of the Tye River Navigation Company, were among the subscribers. Two of Massie's sons, Thomas Jr., and William, also committed for two shares each. From the Valley side, David Steele and his son, John Steele, Jr., each subscribed for four shares, as did Robert McCormick, father of Cyrus.<sup>18</sup>

Over the next three years, approximately seventy-five percent of the subscriptions were paid, and work began on the road. By December, 1822, four miles had been completed, "comprising all the worst parts of the road to make," resulting in "a fine mountain road, eighteen feet wide except where solid masses of Rock interfere, & in those places, few in number comparatively, we have had the road at least ten feet wide on a solid wall of rock."<sup>19</sup> Work was underway on another five and three-quarter miles. By now running short of funds, the TRBR concluded the time was right to request a state subscription.



*Oil painting of William Massie (Courtesy of a Massie descendant)*

Under the General Turnpike Law, the Board of Public Works (BPW) could subscribe for stock in these joint enterprises if the General Assembly authorized such an investment, but only after sixty percent of the capitalization had been subscribed, and one-fifth of the subscriptions actually paid in, or double that secured by bond or deed of trust.<sup>20</sup> Although it appears that the latter requirement was more than met, the TRBR board was concerned that the subscription of only \$3,600 of the authorized capitalization of \$6,000, while meeting the minimum requirement of sixty percent might

deter the BPW from making a positive recommendation to the General Assembly, which still had to approve the state subscription. The TRBR board took several tacks. First, it argued that \$6,000 was not needed to complete the road; only \$5,000, or maybe only \$4,600, would be required. Second, the board presented the personal guarantees of "7 or 8 very independent men binding themselves to the President and Directors of the Company" for the unpaid portion of the \$3,600 subscription. Lastly, it asserted that "the stock will net [generate a dividend] of 12 or 15 per cent after the road is passible."<sup>21</sup> These arguments persuaded the Board of Public Works to recommend to the legislature that the state subscribe for twenty shares, or \$1,000.<sup>22</sup> The House of Delegates did so on January 31, 1823,<sup>23</sup> but the bill failed in the Senate. Delegate Rives explained to William Massie:

In the Senate we had the potent hand of Mr. Johnson, and our Senator, Mr. Cabell, but it appears that all has been unavailing. The principal objections urged in the Senate against its passage were (as I understand) that the work was too small to merit public patronage, and secondly, that the stock would not be productive. ... The fund for internal improvement appears to me to be distributed with great favoritism, and partiality.<sup>24</sup>

The company returned the following session, this time submitting guarantees signed by twenty of the subscribers, promising that



the state would receive annually six percent of a subscription of up to \$1,000 for fifteen years.<sup>25</sup> William Massie's brother Thomas was now a member of the General Assembly. He did not sign the guarantee, although his father and brother did. Another bill, again authorizing a \$1,000 state subscription, passed the House, coincidentally a year to the day after the earlier bill.<sup>26</sup> On February 11, 1824, Delegate Massie advised his brother that "the appropriation of \$1,000 has passed the lower house but not yet I believe the Senate."<sup>27</sup> A week later, he ominously advised:

Joe Cabell informs me there is some reason to doubt the passage of the Tye River Turnpike Bill through the Senate notwithstanding the guarantee to the state of 6 pr cent by the bonds of the stockholders. The opinion urged is that it is nothing more than a county road.<sup>28</sup>

The prediction was accurate; again the bill failed to pass the Senate.

Other than the sparse correspondence and legislative footprints, records from the first five years of TRBR's existence have not survived. Even the initial officers are unknown, except that John B. Christian was secretary and perhaps John Steele served as treasurer.<sup>29</sup> While Major Thomas Massie and his son William had been active, their roles certainly increased in 1824. Major Massie became the company's financier, loaning at least \$1,500 to the company; the loans were guaranteed by the shareholders.<sup>30</sup> William Massie became the company's treasurer, a position he held for the remainder of the company's existence.<sup>31</sup> With the infusion of cash from the Massie loan, construction proceeded. William Massie assiduously collected receipts for sums disbursed for construction and other expenses, many to shareholders.

The effort to make the Tye River navigable had apparently foundered by this time. In December, 1824, Robert Doake, president of TRBR, asked the Nelson County Court to appoint commissioners to select a route for a road from Massie's Mill to New Market.<sup>32</sup> Such a connection to the James River would have been essential to the success of the turnpike.

In May, 1825, six shareholders (William Massie, William Tate, James T. Tate, Robert McCormick, John Steele and George Hight) borrowed five hundred dollars from Major Massie.<sup>33</sup> This money was used to purchase a lot and construct a toll house at the foot of the mountain in Nelson County.<sup>34</sup> Samuel Gay was employed as the



gatekeeper, receiving a salary of ten dollars per quarter. On the west or north side in Rockbridge County, the gatekeeper was George Hight, who leased the toll gate for five years at forty-five dollars annually. He kept the tolls collected, but was responsible for keeping the road on that section in repair.<sup>35</sup>

Before the company could collect tolls, however, the county courts in the counties through which the road ran had to accept the reports of commissioners appointed to inspect the turnpike. In October 1825, the Rockbridge County Court acquiesced.<sup>36</sup> The following month, the Nelson County Court did likewise.<sup>37</sup>

The struggle to obtain state funding had not ended. Yet another petition was forwarded to Richmond in December, 1825, summarizing the history to date:

... In the summer of 1818 an act was passed incorporating the company with a capital stock of \$6,000. That more than three-fifths of that sum was subscribed in shares of fifty dollars each, and paid in. After the amount of the same was expended (and we think to much advantage and saving) in making road, a considerable portion of work still remained to be done to complete the road, and it appeared no more stock could be secured from individuals. Application was made to the Legislature to authorize the Board of Public Works to take a portion of the stock for this purpose. A bill passed the house of delegates but was rejected in the Senate. The result of this application was extremely discouraging to the stockholders inasmuch as the road in the situation it then was could be of no advantage to the public and consequently the time and money expended on it would be lost. They therefore as the only alternative concluded to take [as indebtedness] (if it could be had) a sum sufficient to finish the road, hoping that some future session of the legislature would grant them relief. They accordingly borrowed the sum of \$2,000, with the aid of which they have so far progressed in the work so that the publick is now receiving much benefit from the road, and the stockholders have been authorized by the courts of the counties through which parts of the said road passes to erect tollgates and are now receiving tolls for ten miles of the same. ...

... Your memorialists would further remark that no road in this section of the state has received any aid from the fund for public improvement, and confidently believe that the road is, or will be when fully completed, of much public utility, and such as the General Assembly ought to patronize. We therefore pray your honorable body may pass a law authorizing the Board of Public Works to subscribe stock in the amount of twenty four hundred dollars, being two fifths of the capital stock named in the act of incorporation, with the aid of which we feel confident that the borrowed money can be refunded & the road fully and speedily completed.<sup>38</sup>



Delegate Thomas Massie presented the petition to the House of Delegates. A bill authorizing a subscription for fifty shares again passed the House on February 2, 1826.<sup>39</sup> The third attempt to secure Senate approval was finally successful, but with a significant amendment. The enacted bill contained a proviso that “the amount of the subscription hereby authorized be appropriated exclusively towards the improvement and completion of the said road,”<sup>40</sup> thereby precluding the company from using state funds to repay the loans from Major Massie.

Initially, TRBR accepted the legislation and on December 3, 1826 authorized John B. Christian to draw the state funds.<sup>41</sup> But clearly the proviso rankled, and optimistically believing that the tolls would be adequate to pay off the principal and interest, and still be adequate to keep the road in repair, TRBR did not apply for the state subscription.<sup>42</sup> Experience eroded TRBR’s resolve, and on December 11, 1828, the TRBR board appointed William Massie as its agent to attend the Board of Public Works meeting in Richmond to make whatever statements were necessary regarding the subscription.<sup>43</sup> On January 20, 1829, the BPW agreed to subscribe for forty-eight shares, the balance of the authorized capitalization not already subscribed by private investors, with one half payable on July 15 and the other half payable on January 15, 1830.<sup>44</sup>

In return for its investment, the BPW was entitled to a proportionate number of directors, and the company was obligated to submit annual reports. The company was also required to submit a list of shareholders, and a map of the turnpike. The list was submitted in December of 1831, and a map promised with the next report.<sup>45</sup> William Hill surveyed the road for \$23.83, providing two maps.<sup>46</sup>

Even before the company had received the state subscription, the BPW appointed John B. Christian and William Massie as its directors.<sup>47</sup> In 1831, Christian was also named proxy, entitling him to vote the state’s shares at stockholder’s meetings.<sup>48</sup> (Nothing precluded a state director or proxy from serving as a company officer.) Christian and Massie continued in these roles until Christian’s death in 1837. Massie recommended John Steele as Christian’s successor,<sup>49</sup> but Steele, having been appointed postmaster of Steeles Tavern, declined.<sup>50</sup> In 1840, Massie was appointed proxy and director, and Matthew Bryan, the owner of Vesuvius Furnace, director.<sup>51</sup> In 1844, Massie





was continued as proxy, but Robert McCormick and Matthew Bryan were appointed directors.<sup>52</sup> There is no explanation for this change, and it is possible that Massie was unaware of it. As treasurer, he continued to communicate with the Board of Public Works. In 1847 and for several years thereafter, Massie was appointed proxy, but no directors were named.<sup>53</sup>

The annual report was an aggravation for Massie. In October 1831, he received a circular from the Board of Public Works detailing the content required,<sup>54</sup> and his report for that year was delayed in order to comply, but reflected his pique.<sup>55</sup> Several years later, his report noted, "From some cause or other, I received...no report of the board of public works, nor did you (as usual) send me an admonitory communication. I hope, nevertheless, the report is made in an acceptable manner."<sup>56</sup> He received no reply to this, and the following year was particularly offended by a letter reprimanding him for not submitting his report for that year on time. In replying to James Brown, Jr., the Second Auditor (today's Auditor of Public Accounts), the chief official of the BPW, he admitted that he had prepared the report, and then neglected to post it, "but in extenuation I must say that I did not know whether it was my duty to make it at all. There has been nothing received by me from you on this subject for nearly two years."<sup>57</sup> He sent a second letter of the same date to Brown:

... intended for your private perusal. For the last two years no report of the Board of Public Works has been sent to this little company that I know of, and as my last two annual reports have been acknowledged in no other mode, I am left in the dark whether or not these reports have been received.

I advised you a year ago of the death of J.B. Christian, who had acted in the Company as Director on behalf of the state, and recommended the substitution of Jno. Steele, Jr. of Midway, Augusta. Whether he was appointed or who I know not. I have not been appointed Director for the last 2 years, nor have I been advised who has been.

Will you be so good as to draft me a line & say whether this and my two preceding reports have been rec'd, also whether I am yet regarded a Director on behalf of the State. If so, who else is, or if I am not, who is? ...<sup>58</sup>

Massie's patience was still short the following year, when in response to the BPW requirement for reflecting all toll receipts since the commencement of the work, he noted, "I really have not the time to



overhaul all the old entries made since 1824 – nor do I deem it important to do so, inasmuch as all the tolls and profits have been regularly reported in each previous annual report.”<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, he continued to submit the “long and I have thought (for the most part) unnecessary report each year, ... nine tenths of which is utterly useless.”<sup>60</sup>

On August 12, 1829, Massie traveled to Lynchburg to collect the first installment of the state subscription.<sup>61</sup> Several weeks later, notwithstanding the legislative proviso, Massie paid off the five hundred dollar note held by his father which had been executed by the six shareholders,<sup>62</sup> and had provided the funds to purchase the Nelson County tollhouse in 1825. This amounted to TRBR purchasing the toll house, and Massie had advised the Board of Public Works of the intention to do this the previous year.<sup>63</sup> He dissembled slightly, however, when he stated that the six had purchased the property in their own names; the deed had been to TRBR.<sup>64</sup> The company’s indebtedness reported in its annual reports to the BPW accordingly dropped from \$2,000 to \$1,500.<sup>65</sup>

The year of 1829 had not been a good year for tolls on the TRBR. Under the General Turnpike Law, tolls could be collected only if the road was in good repair, and while a procedure existed where the county court could suspend collection of tolls, most companies suspended tolls voluntarily to avoid the cumbersome procedure of getting tolls reinstated by the county court. The Nelson toll gates had been thrown open because of the state of the road.<sup>66</sup> Concern was growing about the condition of the road in Rockbridge, where George Hight, the gatekeeper, was responsible for keeping the road in repair. On September 13, 1829, John Steele wrote to Massie, asserting that repairs were needed.<sup>67</sup> A week later, he wrote again, stating that there were approximately twenty cases where the company could be fined for charging tolls while the road was out of repair, that this constituted a violation of Hight’s contract with the company, and that a committee consisting of Steele, James Tate, and Robert McCormick had been appointed to view the road, assess the cost of repairs, and propose a settlement of the dispute.<sup>68</sup> The committee executed a contract with James Brawley to superintend repairs to the road several weeks later.<sup>69</sup>

Sketchy legal records probably relate to this dispute. On August 28, 1829, the Augusta County Court received a report on the condi-



tion of the Tye River and Blue Ridge Turnpike, and ordered it filed with the clerk.<sup>70</sup> This had probably been initiated by John Steele, for the following year George Hight moved to quash the order and have a summons issued against Steele to show cause why the proceedings should not be dismissed.<sup>71</sup> A year later, Thomas Mayburry, the ironmaster of the Vesuvius Furnace in Rockbridge County, replaced Steele as the defendant, which suggests that Steele, an Augusta resident, may have been instigated by Mayburry to complain about the road.<sup>72</sup> Apparently a question had been raised about how much of the turnpike was in Augusta County,<sup>73</sup> and upon determining that none was (or at least no portion that was the subject of the complaint), the Augusta County Court rescinded its order of August 29, 1829, which had admitted the report to record.<sup>74</sup> The case may have been transferred to Rockbridge County, for on July 21, 1832, Hight wrote Massie:

I went to Lexington on Thursday last to consult with Mr. Baxter who is counsel for me in the case with Mayburry. I showed him the letter you put in my possession for that purpose. He instructs me to produce evidence at the next court to shew that John Steele was a Director at the time he complained to the magistrate who made the report, etc., which he says should be done by the records of the Directors. ... Also the surveyor who ran the county line should be summoned to show the road complained of was not in the county where the magistrate resided who had the proceeding in the case.<sup>75</sup>

While this dispute was making its glacial progress through the courts, Hight's lease of the Rockbridge toll house to the company expired. Massie had advised the BPW that the company intended to purchase both toll houses, and the company had already acquired the one in Nelson County. The dissatisfaction with Hight's maintenance of the road made termination of TRBR's arrangement with him all the more desirable. An agreement was made on August 12, 1830, whereby Hight would sell the toll house tract to the company, along with "the liberty of using so much wood from the lands of George Hight contiguous thereto as may be necessary to supply the tole gate keeper or occupant of said lot with fuel."<sup>76</sup> An accompanying memorandum signed by William M. Tate, president, noted that "the wood is to be cut from the hill side fronting Mayburry's Furnace." Several months later, Robert McCormick, one of the board members, requested Massie to bring his compass and chains so that they could survey the toll house tract.<sup>77</sup> Apparently Hight disputed



the survey, and procrastinated in delivering a deed. On December 30, 1830, Massie wrote him, "I will here take occasion to give you some friendly advice. You are an old man & don't let your prejudices against other people lead you into error. If you get entangled in a chancery suit about that spot of rocky ground the cost of the suit may cost you five times as much as the lot was brought."<sup>78</sup> The deed was eventually executed on May 30, 1831.<sup>79</sup>

This was not the first time that Massie had taken his much senior colleague to task. He had written Hight the previous January, complaining that Hight had not paid the interest due Major Massie on the notes the shareholders, including Hight, had executed. Hight had responded that the company owed him \$23.14. Massie countered angrily that this had been paid "as you well know." He continued, "I would advise you as a friend to be guarded in this matter. I, as the company's agent, shall boldly do my duty, without fear, favor or affection."<sup>80</sup>

With the acquisition of the Rockbridge toll house from George Hight, TRBR became responsible for maintaining the road along its entire length. The directors, and Massie in particular, took an active role. On July 28, 1831, Massie advised his fellow directors:

I have been on the road for the purpose of examining the same four different days, and think it is now fully done up to Gay's contract, except the cleaning out of the ford, which he promises to finish as soon as the river gets a little lower. ... The road now looks well, with the exception of the rock which are fixed firmly in it, & which can't be removed without blasting. There are seven hundred and four rock fixed in the road from Sandy Ridge to Ballard's Old School house. I have had an offer to remove them for \$100. I think though I can get it done for less money. The ford at John DeMaster's is also a very bad one, & I think an excellent ford may be made some 20 or 30 yards above the present one. ... I think I can get both jobs, that & the blowing, done for one hundred & fifteen dollars or less. ... I think it is proper to authorize me to let out the same. I will attend to it, have it done well, & at as low a price as possible.<sup>81</sup>

The directors concurred.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, a committee composed of William Tate and Adam Shultz reviewed the road from the gate on the west side to Sandy Ridge, and approved paying John Porter \$134 for repairs.<sup>83</sup> Much of the work was contracted to the two gate keepers, Samuel Gay<sup>84</sup> and William Moran.<sup>85</sup> Directors were also reimbursed for work they did.<sup>86</sup> Unfortunately, the cost of repairs frequently exceeded the revenue from tolls.<sup>87</sup>



Tolls on turnpikes were set forth in the General Turnpike Law.<sup>88</sup> TRBR also collected for annual passes, apparently based on anticipated or historical usage. Jesse Hatter paid a dollar fifty, Albert Grant one dollar, and Edmund Coffee, three dollars and fifty cents.<sup>89</sup> The Vesuvius Furnace was a major user of the turnpike. Probably in retaliation for Mayburry's complaint about the condition of the road, John B. Christian wrote Massie, "The Treasurer is hereby directed to require all wagons handling iron and castings on the Turnpike road to pay the tolls at the gates as they pass."<sup>90</sup> Mayburry sold Vesuvius Furnace to Edward and Matthew Bryan in 1832.<sup>91</sup> The Bryan brothers paid an annual charge, often in arrears.<sup>92</sup> After Edward Bryan died in 1838, Matthew Bryan continued the operation, and in 1842, he complained to Massie about the annual charge of twenty-five dollars, claiming that he was no longer cutting timber for charcoal in the mountains, and offering twelve dollars and fifty cents.<sup>93</sup> His offer was not well received, and after accepting appointment as one of the state directors the following month<sup>94</sup>, he paid seventy-five dollars, most of which was in arrears.<sup>95</sup> Apparently, notes were often accepted in payment for annual tolls.<sup>96</sup> During this same period, Robert McCormick and his son Cyrus had started Cotopaxi Furnace north of the turnpike in Augusta County. While Robert McCormick did make a payment of sixteen dollars "in part on an old bond of his" in 1844, it is not clear whether this was related to Cotopaxi.<sup>97</sup>

The vitality of this enterprise was by now waning. The progression from enthusiasm to resignation is illustrated in the following extracts from petitions, reports and correspondence:

1822 It is my positive opinion that the road will be a great publick convenience, & none of us doubt that the stock will net 12 or 15 pr cent after the road is passible.<sup>98</sup>

1823 We ... thinking that the road when finished, will unquestionably yield at least six pr cent, or more pr annum, feel no difficulty in guaranteeing six pr cent to the board of publick works on any amount they may subscribe to the said road ... for fifteen years ....<sup>99</sup>

1828 The Company sanguinely believe, that when the road is cleared to an equal width, by blowing out the rocks that in many places render it very narrow, and in other respects put in good order, that the tolls will so far increase, as to pay an interest of from four to six per cent on the capital of \$6,000.<sup>100</sup>



1829 The road has been so much out of order, that it has been but little used within the last year; and for the last six months, we have thrown open the gate on the south side of the mountain, though expect the next year to be much more profitable in the way of tolls.<sup>101</sup>

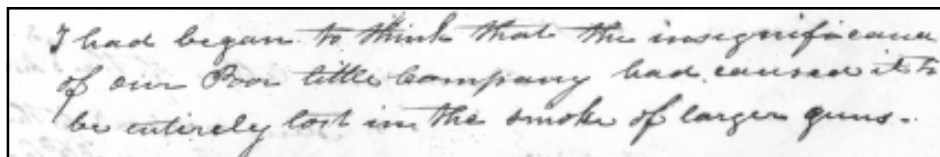
1831 I can only impute the very small amount of tolls received heretofore to the bad character the road bore when in its rough and unfinished state: it is now in very good order, and will be by the middle of next summer, when all the contracts are completed, a most unexceptionable road of its kind.<sup>102</sup>

1834 The poor little road has many stupid, savage and malignant enemies, which have made the duties of its patrons vastly more arduous. It pays little or no toll. I will nevertheless keep it up as long as I can.<sup>103</sup>

1837 To be candid, I have for some years back, acted pretty much as board of directors, treasurer and clerk of this little concern – a trouble and responsibility which I would by no means envy, if in the hands of another. The road is, however, a great convenience to a portion of the community, and not less so to me than others; I shall consequently be willing in future, (as heretofore,) to do the best I can for it.<sup>104</sup>

1838 This little co., it is true, is not of much importance, yet however insignificant, the duty [to file the annual report], while incumbent upon me I feel bound to fulfill. In this case I may be held responsible, but am uncertain and wish to be advised.<sup>105</sup>

1839 I had begun to think that the insignificance of our poor little company had caused it to be lost in the smoke of larger guns, and although I have a great parental tenderness for it (being its best friend from its commencement in 1818 to the present day) I began to feel that it would have to sink. I hope however that it many yet see a better day.<sup>106</sup>



*I had begun to think that the insignificance of our poor little company had caused it to be entirely lost in the smoke of larger guns.*

*Portion of the annual report by William Massie to the Board of Public Works, 11 January 1839. (Library of Virginia)*

1843 [After the freshet of 1842] the road is not yet in sufficient order to receive tolls, nor can I now say that our means will be adequate to its repairs; endeavors however will be continued to effect that end.<sup>107</sup>





1844 The state's scrip [certificate] for 48 shares is herewith sent, which I trust will be more profitable to the commonwealth than I fear it will be.<sup>108</sup>

1846 The road (as almost all other turnpikes in the state) has proved a clear loss to its stockholders, besides causing long & profitless trouble to its managers, of whom I have been the principal. Except for a desire to keep a road open across the mountain, I should long ago have abandoned it. If it goes down, I shall be sorry for it, but really can't help it.<sup>109</sup>

1847 The truth is that the road has for many years past (instead of proving a source of profit) been inadequate to keep itself in order. The old & zealous patrons (except myself) have nearly all died or removed. ... The stock is looked upon as worse than nothing, consequently is not recognized as property by the heirs of its dec'd stockholders.<sup>110</sup>

The single event which precipitated the demise of the Tye River and Blue Ridge Turnpike Company was a presentment issued by the grand jury in Rockbridge County alleging that the turnpike in Rockbridge County was out of repair.<sup>111</sup> A presentment is similar to an indictment, except that it is issued by the grand jury on its own volition rather than in response to a request by the Commonwealth. In response to the presentment, a magistrate reported that an inspection by freeholders concluded that the road was out of repair. This infuriated Massie, who wrote a lengthy and emotional letter to Samuel McDowell Reid which he requested be read to the county court:

Will you be so kind as to examine the report, & write me whether the magistrate in his report of the examination by the Freeholders stated if the parts out of repair were in more than one section of the road - & whether he in all respects complied with the act of 28 February 1842. If he did not I (as State Director) shall treat the proceeding with the contempt its enactors deserve, well knowing as they did the company was not collecting tolls when they made the examination. The road in question runs over a very broad & extremely rough mountain, was made with vast labor though little money. Individuals paid some \$5000 - & the State \$2400. It owes a debt (to its own Patrons) of \$1500 with interest thereon for more than 20 years, the principal of which is included in the Estimate of \$5000. It has never paid one cent of dividend, the tolls having been insufficient to keep it in order, though the whole of them have been in that way applied.

A part of the road from the top of the mountain in this direction, vastly more to keep in order than any other & absolutely dangerous to travel, I (under order of the Board) contracted with my



son last fall (as the law inhibited me from taking a contract) to put in order for \$65 (all the money then on hand.) Under his contract he took 35 able-bodied men – 16 oxen, 4 horses – with carts, coulters, ploughs & a full supply of all other suitable tools, & worked two weeks upon the road, each day (sundays excepted) from daybreak until dark, camping the hands on the road at night, & giving it in addition my constant personal attention. For which I need not tell you near \$200 worth of work more than the \$65 was done. This side, of course, was put in very fine order. If a similar contractor can be met with for the other side, that too can be put in complete order. Indeed the labour of putting the road on the Rockbridge side in order is comparatively trifling & it's now in about as good order as I have seen it for the last 20 years, except a few places & they are not very bad. If the citizens of Rockbridge insist on the road being kept in better order than the tolls will justify, it must either go down altogether or that part of it lying in Rockbridge become a tax on that county. All of the old Patrons of the road except Robt McCormick, John Steele & myself (the former of whom is now lying extremely ill) have died or removed & given up the ship. I have laboured with great zeal for it since 1818 (28 years), am at last very much fagged with its profitless duties, & should the Gate be thrown open by a regular action of the Court of Rockbridge will for one be in favor of letting it remain so - & in 18 months the charter will be forfeited on that section. ...

I hope you will pardon this liberty. I would write to a lawyer to defend the Company, but they [the Company] being as poor as Job's Turkey, have no funds for a fee.<sup>112</sup>

Massie had his suspicions about who had instigated the problems in Rockbridge. In a private letter of the same date to Reid, he claimed, "There is a gang of pirates about the west terminous of the road (who wish to pillage the mountain of shingle, nails & cole wood, of whom that snake fellow M. Bryan & cat fish mouth Lusk are the leaders) who are the actors in this matter. They desire to use the road free of toll, without caring at whose expense it is kept in repair."<sup>113</sup>

Massie's letters did not alter the decision of the Rockbridge County Court.<sup>114</sup> In November, 1846, he wrote James Brown, "This communication is written to get your private advice and those acting with you as to what I had best do with out poor little turnpike. ... The first pioneer & best friend to the road (excepted myself) Mr. Robert McCormick of Rockbridge died last July, since which I am (it may be said) alone in its support, and although my own business more than absorbs my whole time, I would yet act if I knew what to do – but I fear the road is at the end of its turnpike existence."<sup>115</sup> Massie went on to ask whether the Nelson toll gates should be opened, and what should be done with the toll houses. Brown did not reply to these questions, and the following spring asked for a list of shareholders, which gave Massie an opportu-



nity to reiterate his questions.<sup>116</sup> Still receiving no advice from the Board of Public Works, Massie turned to the State Auditor, James E. Heath, writing "I am really worn out fighting against fate, and greatly desire to be advised on the subject. ... I have addressed two private letters to Jas. Brown, Jr., 2<sup>nd</sup> Auditor, ... respectfully seeking advice on the subject, to both of which I received no answer It may be that he thinks it wrong to answer. If so, however, I should think that courtesy would dictate the propriety of dropping me a line to that effect." Massie went on to ask again whether opening the toll gates in Nelson for eighteen months constituted forfeiture of the company's charter, and how the toll houses should be handled.<sup>117</sup> Heath replied that he had met with Brown, who was of the opinion that the Nelson gates should be thrown open. That was not of much help, as they had been open since July, 1846. Heath also reported that, "As to the Balance in your hands, he [Brown] knows of no one who has a better right to it than yourself, the fund for internal improvement having no claim to it."<sup>118</sup>

Probably before he had received the report of Heath's meeting with Brown, Massie wrote to Sidney Baxter, the Attorney General of Virginia, posing the same questions, and more specifically, what right of ownership to the toll houses could be conveyed, and what should be done with the proceeds of a sale.<sup>119</sup> Massie's persistence prompted a meeting of Baxter, Brown, and Nelson County Delegate Charles Perrow, and Perrow reported that the two officials had agreed that the charter would be forfeited. Baxter had offered that the toll houses would revert to their original owners, but Brown felt that that if the company had purchased the properties, they would not revert, and "there is no company but yourself."<sup>120</sup>

Meanwhile, Massie submitted the last report of the Tye River and Blue Ridge Turnpike Company, excusing its tardiness by noting that he was still awaiting advice on the dissolution. Reflecting his longstanding annoyance with the picayune detail demanded, he concluded, "I have not made the usual lengthy report, nor do I suppose it will be deemed necessary to say of a dead thing all that is required for it."<sup>121</sup>

The vague and inconsistent legal advice he had received being useless, Massie turned to the General Assembly. A legislative petition was submitted in 1850, seeking permission to sell the two toll houses and distribute the proceeds.<sup>122</sup> The legislature concurred, appointing Thomas Massie a commissioner to sell the properties of the TRBR (but not



the roadbed), and to distribute the proceeds.<sup>123</sup> Both toll houses were sold in November, 1851. William Massie bought the Nelson toll house property at the public auction for \$190.<sup>124</sup> Nathaniel Moran bought the Rockbridge property at the other auction for forty dollars and fifty cents.<sup>125</sup> Thomas Massie invited the stockholders to forward their certificates to him.<sup>126</sup> He then submitted the report of the sale to the Board of Public Works, reflecting that after deducting the expenses of sale, for each share of fifty-dollar stock was returned \$1.69.<sup>127</sup> The turnpike thereafter became a county road.

The Tye River and Blue Ridge Turnpike was an early effort to traverse the mountains and connect the Valley to eastern Virginia. Commercial objectives like this, combined with local boosterism, political influence, and a legislature seeking to provide infrastructure without imposing taxes, fueled the turnpike movement in Virginia. Like most such enterprises, the TRBR was a commercial failure, a lesson ignored by later applicants for charters. (TRBR was writhing in its death throes as the issuance of charters peaked in the 1840s and 1850s.) The road is a testament to the leadership and persistence of William Massie, whose correspondence documents the life cycle of most turnpike companies, from optimism to realism to pessimism to resignation. The road still exists as part of Virginia's secondary highway system, providing evidence today of the difficulties the mountains posed to the early builders and drivers in the nineteenth century.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>1819 Code of Virginia, Ch. 228. The Board of Public Works also oversaw other major internal improvements of this period receiving state investments, including canals, railroads, and bridges.

<sup>2</sup>1819 Code of Virginia, Ch. 234.

<sup>3</sup>Philip Morrison Rice, "The Virginia Board of Public Works," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1947), 64; Hunter, 46-48.

<sup>4</sup>At that time, incorporation required a specific act of the legislature. In the mid-1850s, a less cumbersome procedure was enacted for mining and manufacturing companies, and then extended to enterprises other than roads.

<sup>5</sup>Hunter, 8.

<sup>6</sup>*Report of the Select Committee on the Subject of Internal Improvements, March, 1860*, Document 86, Governor's Message and Accompanying Documents, House Journal (Film 1063, Reel 17), Library of Virginia (LOV).

<sup>7</sup>See Langhorne Gibson, Jr., *Cabell's Canal: The Story of the James River and Kanawha Canal* (Richmond: The Commodore Press, 2000).

<sup>8</sup>Legislative Petition, 7 December 1811, Amherst and Nelson Counties, Box 12, Folder 34 (Reel 10), LOV.

<sup>9</sup>Chapter 46, 1816-1817 Acts of Assembly. Mill Grove was just upstream of Massie's Mill. Mill Grove and Kings Island are shown on a map of the Tye River and Blue Ridge Turnpike submitted to the Board of Public Works in 1832. Subscriptions were solicited on August 5, 1817 at Rose Mills in Nelson County. Massie Papers, Special Collections, Swem Library, College of William and Mary. John Thompson, writing as secretary for the Tye River Com-



pany, on February 13, 1819 advised the Board of Public Works that three fifths of the stock had been subscribed, and requested the BPW to direct its engineer to survey the river. Tye River Navigation Co., BPW 112, LOV. The BPW did so on February 20, 1819. BPW Journal B, p. 43. There is no record of any report from the engineer, and no evidence that any work to clear the Tye River ensued.

<sup>10</sup>The Staunton and James River Turnpike was being organized to connect Staunton with Scottsville, a major port on the James. Chapter 32, 1817 Acts of Assembly; Chapter 85, 1818 Acts of Assembly.

<sup>11</sup>Legislative Petition, 28 December 1818, Augusta County, Box 16, Folder 70 (Reel 13), LOV. Sink's Gap is probably the Zink's Gap shown on Jedediah Hotchkiss' Topographic Sketch of St. Mary Iron Lands, February 1883 Supplement to No. 38 of "The Virginias."

<sup>12</sup>This likely refers to the road past the later Cotopaxi Furnace, which was known as Zink's Road. See Augusta Deed Book 66, 405.

<sup>13</sup>Legislative Petition, 16 December 1818, Box 17, Folder 69 (Reel 13), LOV.

<sup>14</sup>Samuel Finley to Major Baldwin, 5 December 1818, filed with Legislative Petitions, Augusta County, Box 17, Folder 69 (Reel 13), LOV.

<sup>15</sup>Rough Bills, 15 February 1819, LOV.

<sup>16</sup>1819 House Journal, 322 (Reel 7), LOV.

<sup>17</sup>Chapter 86, 1818-1819 Acts of Assembly.

<sup>18</sup>Compilations of shareholder lists prepared in 1831, 1844, and 1847 are shown in Exhibit 1.

<sup>19</sup>William Massie to Robert Rives, 15 December 1822, filed with Legislative Petitions, Nelson County, Box 177, Folder 28 (Reel 135), LOV. (Hereafter, all citations to William Massie omit his surname.) The bond, dated 11 December 1822, was signed by John B. Christian, Robert McCormick, John Steele, George Hight, Robert Doake, William Massie, and James Tate. BPW-TRBR.

<sup>20</sup>1819 Code, Ch. 228, Section 11, 205.

<sup>21</sup>Massie to Rives, 15 December 1822.

<sup>22</sup>1823 House Journal, 23 January 1823, 146 (Reel 8), LOV.

<sup>23</sup>1823 House Journal, 31 January 1823, 153 (Reel 8), LOV.

<sup>24</sup>Rives to Massie, 14 February 1823, William Massie Collection, Records of AnteBellum Southern Plantations, Series G, Part 2, University of Texas (hereafter Massie Papers, RASP) (Frame 66, Reel 1436, LOV).

<sup>25</sup>Guarantees, 21 November 1823, TRBR-BPW.

<sup>26</sup>1824 House Journal, 31 January 1824, 148 (Reel 9), LOV.

<sup>27</sup>Thomas Massie to Massie, 11 February 1824, Massie Papers, Special Collections, Duke Library, Durham, NC (hereafter Massie Papers, Duke.)

<sup>28</sup>Thomas Massie to Massie, 17 February 1824, Massie Papers, Duke.

<sup>29</sup>Massie to Robert Rives, 15 December 1822; John B. Christian to John Steele, 12 January 1824, Massie Papers, RASP, (Frame 523, Reel 1436, LOV). Twenty years later, William Massie noted that Christian's death in 1835 had resulted in the loss of a part of the company's books and papers. TRBR Report to BPW, 30 September 1844 (actually submitted 14 November 1844.)

<sup>30</sup>Agreements, 30 April 1824, Massie Papers, RASP (Frames 669-675, Reel 1436, LOV).

<sup>31</sup>Robert McCormick to William Massie, 14 May 1824, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 692, Reel 1436, LOV). From this date on, better records are available, especially from the Massie Papers, RASP, and the TRBR Treasurer's Book in the McCormick Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society.

<sup>32</sup>Minutes, 27 December 1824, Nelson County Court, 1823-24, 364.

<sup>33</sup>Notes, 30 May 1825, Massie Papers, RASP (Frames 181-187, Reel 1437, LOV).

<sup>34</sup>Nelson Deed Book 5, p. 364. William Massie was authorized to "make the best bargain you can" for the "house and things we want done on the south side." Memorandum, Steele, McCormick and Hight to Massie, 13 June 1825. Massie contracted with James Harvie to construct a house, Statement of Account, July, 1825, and with Robert Bailey to build the chimney, Receipt, 29 April 1826. Massie Papers, RASP (Frames 224, 247, 801, Reel 1437, LOV).

<sup>35</sup>TRBR Report to BPW for 1826, dated February, 1827; Report for 1828. The salary of the gatekeeper was later reduced to \$5 per quarter. Receipts from William Moran, 28 October 1835, and Samuel Gay, 27 November 1835, Treasurer's Book, McCormick Collection, WHS.

<sup>36</sup>Extract of Minutes, Rockbridge County Court, 3 October 1825, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 489, Reel 1437, LOV); Massie to Samuel McDowell Reid, 2 July 1846, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 590, Reel 1451, LOV).

<sup>37</sup>Minutes, Nelson County Court, 28 November 1825, 1825-26, 112.



<sup>38</sup>Legislative Petition, 29 December 1825, Augusta County, Box 17, Folder 7 (Reel 13), LOV. The \$2,000 apparently included the \$500 loaned to individual shareholders which was used to purchase and build the Nelson County tollhouse.

<sup>39</sup>Rough Bill, 26 January 1826, LOV; House Journal, 2 February 1826, p. 150 (Reel 9 LOV).

<sup>40</sup>Chapter 67, 1825-26 Acts of Assembly.

<sup>41</sup>Resolution, 3 December 1826, TRBR-BPW.

<sup>42</sup>1828 TRBR Report, BPW. TRBR was one of few turnpike companies to ever decline the state subscription, although its position was short lived. Hunter, 41.

<sup>43</sup>Certificate of the TRBR Board, 11 December 1828, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 220, Reel 1439, LOV).

<sup>44</sup>BPW Journal E, 132, 20 January 1829.

<sup>45</sup>1831 Report to BPW.

<sup>46</sup>Entry for 17 July 1832, Treasurer's Book, McCormick Collection, WHS. One of the maps is in the records of the Board of Public Works, LOV; the other remains in the Massie family. As befits handwritten documents, they differ slightly.

<sup>47</sup>BPW Journal E, 85, 96; 23, 28 January 1828.

<sup>48</sup>BPW Journal E, 198, 25 January 1831.

<sup>49</sup>1837 Report to BPW.

<sup>50</sup>Steele to BPW, 17 July 1839, TRBR-BPW.

<sup>51</sup>BPW Journal G, 70, 7 March 1840.

<sup>52</sup>BPW Journal H, 96, 23 April 1844.

<sup>53</sup>BPW Journal H, 407, 23 April 1847; 541, 2 May 1848; Journal I, 156, 18 July 1849; 308, 17 May 1850; 501, 9 May 1851.

<sup>54</sup>Circular, 10 October 1831, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 359, Reel 1441, LOV).

<sup>55</sup>1831 Report to BPW.

<sup>56</sup>1837 Report to BPW.

<sup>57</sup>Massie to James Brown, Jr. 6 January 1839, BPW-TRBR.

<sup>58</sup>Massie to James Brown, Jr., 6 January 1839, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 857, Reel 1445, LOV). The letter is dated 1838, but the reference to Christian's death indicates that the date is in error.

<sup>59</sup>1839 Report to BPW.

<sup>60</sup>Massie to James E. Heath, 27 October 1847, Massie Records, RASP (Frame 730, Reel 1453, LOV).

<sup>61</sup>Treasurer's Book, McCormick Collection, WHS.

<sup>62</sup>Treasurer's Book, McCormick Collection, WHS.

<sup>63</sup>1828 TRBR Report, BPW.

<sup>64</sup>Nelson County Deed Book 5, 364.

<sup>65</sup>Cf. 1828 and 1830 Reports to BPW.

<sup>66</sup>1829 Report to BPW.

<sup>67</sup>John Steele, Jr. to Massie, 13 September 1829, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 732, Reel 1439, LOV).

<sup>68</sup>John Steele to Massie, 20 September 1829, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 744, Reel 1439, LOV).

<sup>69</sup>Agreement with James Brawley, 12 October 1829, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 766, Reel 1439, LOV).

<sup>70</sup>Augusta County Court Orders, Vol. 42, 177, 28 August 1829 (Reel 77, LOV).

<sup>71</sup>Augusta County Court Orders, Vol. 42, 341, 24 August 1830 (Reel 77, LOV).

<sup>72</sup>Augusta County Court Orders, Vol. 43, 7, 25 July 1831 (Reel 77, LOV).

<sup>73</sup>Receipt, Augusta County Court, 28 May 1832, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 794, Reel 1441, LOV).

<sup>74</sup>Augusta County Court Orders, 1 June 1832, Vol. 43, 163 (Reel 77, LOV).

<sup>75</sup>George Hight to Massie, 21 July 1832, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 919, Reel 1441, LOV). Records of the Rockbridge County Court for this period have been destroyed, and there is no further mention of this dispute, although the 1834 Report to BPW includes a \$10 disbursement for "attorney's fee to defend suit in superior court, Rockbridge."

<sup>76</sup>Agreement, 12 August 1830, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 125, Reel 1441, LOV.)

<sup>77</sup>Robert McCormick to Massie, 31 October 1830, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 634, Reel 1440, LOV).

<sup>78</sup>Massie to George Hight, 26 December 1830, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 748, Reel 1440, LOV).

<sup>79</sup>Rockbridge Deed Book R, 236.

<sup>80</sup>Massie to George Hight, 31 January 1830, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 86, Reel 1440, LOV).

<sup>81</sup>William Massie to TRBR board (William Tate, James Tate, Robert McCormick, John B. Christian, and Adam Shultz), 28 July 1831, McCormick Collection, WHS.

<sup>82</sup>John B. Christian to William Massie, 2 August 1831, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 236, Reel 1441, LOV).





<sup>83</sup>Memorandum, 17 August 1831, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 265, Reel 1441, LOV).

<sup>84</sup>Receipt, 23 July 1831; Statement of Account, 15 December 1832; Receipt, 27 November 1834; Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 225, Reel 1441; Frame 140, Reel 1442; Frame 250, Reel 1443; LOV).

<sup>85</sup>Receipts, 10 June 1835, 29 July 1835; Statement of Account, 2 December 1837; Massie Papers, RASP (Frames 744, 814, Reel 1443; Frame 703, Reel 1445, LOV).

<sup>86</sup>Receipts, 30 September 1831, 19 May 1835, 10 June 1835 (Frame 326, Reel 1441; Frames 288, 408, Reel 1443, LOV).

<sup>87</sup>See Exhibit 2.

<sup>88</sup>1819 Code of Virginia, Ch. 234, Section 17.

<sup>89</sup>Entries for 4 July 1835, 7 July 1835, 4 February 1837, Treasurer's Book, McCormick Collection, WHS.

<sup>90</sup>John B. Christian to Massie, 3 December 1831, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 476, Reel 1441, LOV).

<sup>91</sup>Transcript of Agreement, 26 January 1833, Matthew Bryan Papers, Mss. 28-395, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, VA. The deed was executed later, on 27 January 1840. RDB V/207; Augusta DB (ADB) 60/526. Edward Bryan, father of Edward and Matthew Bryan, was a charter shareholder. See Exhibit 1.

<sup>92</sup>Entries for 10 June 1835, 9 June 1837, 10 July 1839, Treasurer's Book, McCormick Collection, WHS.

<sup>93</sup>Matthew Bryan to Massie, 26 March 1842, Massie Records, RASP (Frame 857, Reel 1465, LOV).

<sup>94</sup>Bryan to BPW, 12 April 1842, TRBR-BPW.

<sup>95</sup>Entry for 13 July 1842, Treasurer's Book, McCormick Collection, WHS.

<sup>96</sup>Entry for 2 September, 1842, Treasurer's Book, McCormick Collection, WHS.

<sup>97</sup>1844 Report to BPW.

<sup>98</sup>Massie to Robert Rives, 15 December 1822, Legislative Petitions, Nelson County, Box 177, Folder 28 (Reel 135), LOV.

<sup>99</sup>Guarantee, 21 November 1823, BPW-TRBR, LOV.

<sup>100</sup>1828 Report to BPW.

<sup>101</sup>1829 Report to BPW.

<sup>102</sup>1831 Report to BPW.

<sup>103</sup>1834 Report to BPW.

<sup>104</sup>1837 Report to BPW.

<sup>105</sup>Massie to James Brown, Jr., 6 January 1838, TRBR-BPW.

<sup>106</sup>Massie to James Brown, Jr., 12 January 1839, TRBR-BPW.

<sup>107</sup>1843 Report to BPW.

<sup>108</sup>1844 Report to BPW.

<sup>109</sup>Massie to Samuel McDowell Reid, 2 July 1846, Samuel McDowell Reid Papers, Ulrich B. Phillips Collection, Group 397, Series XI, Box 18, Folder 151, Yale University Library, New Haven CT.. A draft of this letter is in the Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 590, Reel 1451, LOV).

<sup>110</sup>Massie to James Brown, Jr., 3 April 1847, TRBR-BPW.

<sup>111</sup>1845 Report to BPW includes an expense of \$5 for defending a presentment, but no details.

<sup>112</sup>Massie to Samuel McDowell Reid, 2 July 1846, Samuel McDowell Reid Papers, Ulrich B. Phillips Collection; Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 590, Reel 1451, LOV.) The General Turnpike Law allowed tolls for each five mile section. This turnpike extended for twenty-two miles, but TRBR never installed more than two toll gates. Massie was suggesting that the section found to be out of repair might not be in the five mile section for which the Rockbridge County Court had authorized tolls in 1825. Massie was apparently unaware that he had been replaced as a State Director by Robert McCormick in 1844 (although he did remain as the State's proxy.)

<sup>113</sup>Massie to Reid, 2 July 1846, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 90, Reel 1451, LOV). Massie was apparently unaware that Bryan was a State Director of TRBR, but then the board had not met for many years, his reference to the board authorizing the contract for repairs by his son notwithstanding.

<sup>114</sup>In March, 1847, William S. McCormick (son of Robert and brother of Cyrus) wrote Massie seeking his support in an effort to get an appropriation from the Rockbridge County Court to repair the road. William S. McCormick to Massie, 24 March 1847, McCormick Collection, WHS. There is no record of Massie's response.

<sup>115</sup>Massie to James Brown, 18 November 1846, BPW-TRBR. An extract of this letter appeared as TRBR's annual report for 1846.



- <sup>116</sup>Massie to Brown, 3 April 1847, BPW-RTBR.  
<sup>117</sup>Massie to James E. Heath, 27 October 1847, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 730, Reel 1453, LOV).  
<sup>118</sup>Heath to Massie, 30 October 1847, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 740, Reel 1453, LOV).  
<sup>119</sup>Massie to Sidney Baxter, 5 November 1847, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 767, Reel 1452, LOV).  
<sup>120</sup>Charles Perrow to Massie, 19 December 1847, Massie Papers, RASP (Frame 872, Reel 1453, LOV).  
<sup>121</sup>1847 Report to BPW.  
<sup>122</sup>Legislative Petitions, Rockbridge County, 7 January 1850, Box 223, Folder 53 (Reel 175), LOV.  
<sup>123</sup>Chapter 112, 1849-50 Acts of Assembly.  
<sup>124</sup>Nelson Deed Book 13, 288.  
<sup>125</sup>Rockbridge Deed Book II, 404.  
<sup>126</sup>Lexington *Gazette*, 17 February 1853, 3, col. 2.  
<sup>127</sup>Report on Sale, 9 February 1853, BPW-TRBR.

**Exhibit 1: Tye River and Blue Ridge Turnpike Company  
Lists of Shareholders**

	1831	1844	1847
David Steele	4	4	4
Robert McCormick	4	4	4
George Hight	4		4
Edward Bryan	1	1	1
John Steele, Jr.	4	12	4
David Carson	1	1	1
Robert Doak	2	2	2
James Young	1	1	1
Benjamin Edsil	1		1
John B. Christian	1	1	1
Robert Carson	1	1	1
Matthew Shaw	2	2	2
Thomas Steele	1	1	1
William M. Tate	22	2	2
James Tate	2	2	2
Adam Shultz	1	1	1
George Stoner	1	1	1
Jacob Seig	2	2	2
Daniel Sheffey	3	3	3
John Coffey Steele	1		1
John & Peter Jacobs	16		4
Henry Pannock	2	2	2
William Massie	2	12	12
Samuel Fitzgerald	2	2	2
James Montgomery	4	4	4
Thomas Massie, Sr.	2		
Thomas Massie, Jr.	2	3	3
John Tate		2	2
Joseph Hight	—	3	3
Private Stockholders	72	72	74
Commonwealth	—	48	48
Total Shares	72	120	122

Note: There is no explanation for the 1847 total, which would have exceeded the authorized capitalization of \$6,000.

**Exhibit 2: Extracts from Financial Reports Submitted to  
Board of Public Works  
Tye River and Blue Ridge Turnpike Co.**

Ending	Net Tolls & Rent	Repairs	Cash Balance
1829	\$ 46.12	\$ 139.81	\$ 507.23
1830	124.02	698.61	824.38
1831	118.59	391.50	428.00
1832	69.87	147.39	280.00
1833	97.19	15.50	248.39
1834	47.90	94.25	134.14
1835	140.25	223.90	0
1836	56.33	26.87	0
1837	237.73	103.82	63.38
1838	90.27	122.10	(32.83)
1839	106.77	60.00	31.37
1840	105.49	103.63	(18.27)
1841	110.28	92.50	182.49
1842	90.25	143.44	187.78
1843	74.31	120.00	140.89
1844	80.40	116.08	121.21
1845	74.30	102.75	87.76
1846	55.92	111.00	32.28
1847	27.37	22.79	36.71

Note: The above summary does not include miscellaneous expenses. The ending cash balance does not include sums which were accrued (but not disbursed) for payment of the principal and interest on the loans from stockholders. That accrual, for \$160.28, was reversed in 1841 when it became apparent to Massie that these debts would never be repaid.



# Finding landmarks in old Uniontown village (With oral history augmentation)

by Julius W. Gaines

*Many years ago, after talking to elderly family members, the author determined to document the disappearing Uniontown community that contained his family history. That documentation effort was partially funded through a 2005 grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy. Oversight of the project was through the African-American Heritage Festival Foundation, Inc.<sup>1</sup>*

There is very little documentation concerning predominantly African American populated villages and hamlets in Augusta County, Virginia by 1920.<sup>2</sup> The goal of this research is to locate and identify community landmarks concerning Uniontown Village, a predominantly African American community east of Staunton which was annexed by Staunton in 1948. Three segments of oral history interviews are used to augment the discussion.

Coming east from the Staunton Depot on the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Railroad, the village began approximately at the next crossing called Summerson Row Crossing. Summerson Row was a line of identical upright now razed two-story dwellings. The thoroughfare got its name because of the "row" of housing. The housing extended from Waynesboro Pike (now Richmond Road) northward to the first railroad crossing east of the Staunton Depot. This rental housing and probably company owned property<sup>3</sup> was restricted to white renters. The Summerson Row Crossing marked the beginning of both residential and industrial Uniontown. The major effort of this discussion is to locate places that may have been landmarks in Uniontown Village. To do this I have divided the town into four quadrants delineating sections I through IV. The village extending from Summerson Row Crossing in the northwest to the National



*Annotated map sheets can be used to gain a clearer notion of old Uniontown of 1920. The annotations were made based on an interview in 1978 with Dewey Huffman Stewart, born 1903, and Julius Wesley Gaines, Sr., born 1909. Households and landmarks are noted from the interview. A depiction of the sectioning of Uniontown is drawn with broken lines onto the map in the bottom image.*



Cemetery in the southeast gives a good notion of the spread of the community. The arbitrary sectioning of the area goes beyond such local directional usage as “down the track” (walking east to west), “up the track” (walking west to east), “over the road” (northeast toward New Hope). A more formal description of direction and location is devised. The sectioning begins in the southeast instead of the northwestern boundary of the village. This is done because of the National Cemetery landmark and the greater development of this area.<sup>4</sup> These sections are established with the following delineations:

**Section I**

- South - Waynesboro Pike (Richmond Road)
- West - Parcels 6, 14, 24, 33
- North - C & O Railroad Tracks
- East - 1948 city limits line (South-North)

**Section II**

- South - Waynesboro Pike (Richmond Avenue) (East-West)
- West - Summerson Row (South-North)
- North - C & O Railroad Tracks (East-West)
- East - Parcels 6, 14, 24, 23, 33 (South-North)

**Section III**

- South - C & O Railroad Tracks (East-West)
- West - Summerson Row Crossing Lane Extended (South-North)
- North - 1948 City Limits Line (East-West)
- East - Crawford Crossing Lane

**Section IV**

- South - C & O Railroad Tracks (East-West)
- West - Crawford's Crossing Lane (South-North)
- North - 1948 city Limits Line (East-West)
- East - 1948 city Limits Line (South-North)

Annotated city map sheets are used to offer a clearer notion of old Uniontown of 1920. The annotations were made based on an interview in 1978 with Dewey Huffman Stewart, born 1903, and Julius Wesley Gaines, Sr., born 1909. Households and landmarks are noted from the interview. A depiction of the sectioning of Uniontown is drawn with broken lines on one of the maps. Annotated map sheets and census records show that old Uniontown by 1920 included ap-





proximately sixty-four African American heads of household. Of the sixty-four households, fifty-two percent owned their homes. The estimate of white heads of household ranged from seven percent to fifteen percent. The most developed area of the semi-rural community was Section I. This section of the village included the National Cemetery as a major landmark.<sup>5</sup> Also included in Section I was the C&O Bridge (dismantled in 2001) connecting southeast and north-



*National Archives photo of the National Cemetery between 1873-1912*

east village parts. Section I encompassed the Smarts and Byers plats. These two plats were divided into a total of thirty-three lots and then sold. They were bought for new households. The land development began as early as 1871.<sup>6</sup> Deeds show that the developers originally referred to now Patton and Jones Streets as Broadway and North Streets. These thoroughfares did not become streets as such. Rather, they existed as unpaved lanes until the 1948 annexation by the city of Staunton, after which these thoroughfares were paved and named officially. There was, however, some resemblance of a town. The first thoroughfare dead ended at the back gate to the J. A. Gaines truck farm property. The second ran the length of the village from Cemetery Road (now National Avenue) near the eastern border to the second crossing from the Staunton Depot and to what is now Young Street. Young Street runs south intersecting with Richmond Road. It



*Black proprietor  
Paul Marshall  
ran a store and  
meat market in  
this building.*

*The R. H. Gaines  
house still stands  
near the west  
end of Anthony  
Street.*



*Bodley Wagon Works  
as it looks today.*



is also the crossing lane for the second crossing with the village's west border of Summerson Row not far away.

Section II was bounded by Summerson Row to the west and marked by Higgs and Young's Inc. barrel factory. This barrel factory was formerly J. A. Bell and Son's before 1908. The cooper shop of the second owners of the barrel factory, Higgs and Young, was one of nine sources of employment for African American men.<sup>7</sup> The house of one of the founders of Higgs and Young, A. J. Young remains one of the few original Uniontown structures still standing. Though boarded up, it can be found on Richmond Road (old Waynesboro Pike). The house dates back as far as 1890.<sup>8</sup> Purportedly there was a country store near the U.S. Post Office operated by a white proprietor on this south border thoroughfare. The location of the store with post office was surprisingly remembered by one elderly resident during a 1977 interview as Bodley, Va., not Uniontown.<sup>9</sup> Further west was the store and meat market of black proprietor, Paul Marshall.

Section III covers the area across the railroad from Higgs and Young to the northern city limits of 1948. Near the former city limits at the north edge of the village were several industries. One was the Bodley Wagon Works. A red brick building of that business still stands facing north. It is still in use. The railroad crossing nearby was referred to as the Gaines Crossing because of the R. H. Gaines store located in the vicinity. The store was razed long ago. The R. H. Gaines house still stands near the west end of Anthony Street. The house faces north overlooking the area where Bodley Wagon Works once thrived.

The next crossing eastward was the eastern border of Section III. This area was actually the geographic center of old Uniontown. It was referred to as "the bottom" probably because of its lower elevation compared to the higher and densely populated area to the eastern end of the village at Cemetery Road (new National Avenue). Here the C&O railroad ran through the flatland, "the bottom." The spur track jutted out to the northwest to service nearby industries. The J. A. Gaines truck farm was there on the southeastern side of the main track.

Two most noted Section II landmarks situated just northeast of the third crossing and east of the now a mile or so away Staunton Depot were the S. A. Crawford store and the community well. The well was situated facing toward the Crawford store's south side and below the



*The J. A. Gaines  
truck farm property*



railway embankment. The Crawford store was highly patronized by the community. The well was frequently used as a dependable source of water for village residents who did not have cisterns or private wells. Margaret Turner Poindexter (MTP) an elderly former resident born 1911 described in a 2003 interview with the author (JG) the well, its existence and use.

JG: Tell me something about – the water for washing...?  
MTP: We had a cistern.  
JG: And it was important in those days if you had your own.  
MTP: Yes, we had a cistern. That was soft water. You see, they've got the community well. You know about that, don't you?  
JG: Well, something, not too much  
MTP: Well, we had a well when – that was hard water. It came from up in the mountains, Blue Ridge Mountains. It flowed from up in there somewhere. That was hard water.  
JG: How did that well get there?  
MTP: It come through the ground.  
JG: But somebody had to dig it.  
MTP: Oh, yeah, we had a cistern, I mean, a well down home. I don't know who built it.  
JG: Maybe the railroad?  
MTP: I think it belonged on the railroad property. And it had railroad ties across to keep you from falling in. And then about eight, nine years – maybe younger than that – was a man down home named Mr. Ed Harden. He would go [down] there on a ladder. Sometimes people's hats, dogs done fell in there, or whatever.  
JG: And cleaned it out?  
MTP: And cleaned it out. And that's what drew half of the town, to see him go down there and clean it out



*Remains of the S. A. Crawford Store*

Near the north was Sally Jones' house. Sally Jones served as a midwife and later fortune teller, subsequently delving into other entrepreneurships. Because of the proximity of Saint A. Crawford's store to the third crossing east, the crossing was called Crawford Crossing. With daily foot traffic to the store, to the well, and traffic to Sally Jones' house, "the bottom" was characterized by considerable coming and going. This era was before the onslaught of automobiles. People walked to destinations such as the store, the well, and to the city of Staunton by way of the railroad, as well as walking to other houses.

With the exception of a few wagons such as drays, referring to horse drawn hauling wagons, walking human traffic and trains were the means of transportation. At least three daily passenger trains moved east and west in 1918. In addition there was a spur for hauling lime, coal and the other items from and to the local industries on the northern border. The train cars were moved by an engine called a shifter, connecting with railcars of the main east-west railroad regularly during the day. There would have been abundant noise and activity about.

Section IV of Uniontown comes full circle back to the higher elevation part from the southern border of C&O railroad and western border of the Crawford Crossing lane. The northern border in-



*The C&O railroad bridge in late twentieth century (VDOT Bridge reports)*

cluded the back alley (now Anthony Street), the quarry and State Lime Plant. The back alley goes southward to the eastern border at the city limits after intersecting with Cemetery Road. Cemetery Road during the establishment of the National Cemetery after 1868 was also called the New Hope Road. Apparently, the road to New Hope and Waynesboro was what is now Anthony Street prior to the construction of the C&O Bridge. This road extended from what is now Young Street and what was to become Gaines Crossing, that is, the second crossing east of the Stanton Depot. This thoroughfare encompassed the third lane or back alley of old Uniontown.<sup>10</sup> These are details for further exploration and verification.

Questions arise regarding the time of the C&O Bridge's construction. The cut that the bridge spanned (until its demolition in 2001) was made circa 1853-1854 to make possible the level roadbed. The erection of the bridge made available another roadway. It gave access to the southern Waynesboro Pike artery and hence the new roadway acquired the name New Hope Road. Yet there may have been more conjecture there than truth. Certainly the name Cemetery, after the National Cemetery, carries much more weight.





Section IV is noted for several landmarks. The village Augusta County school for African American children had been established as far back as the early 1880s, probably before.<sup>11</sup> The school was called Cemetery School.<sup>12</sup> In reports, the school has been described as originally being a long yellow building of two rooms. In 1919, it was demolished and replaced by a new one room school building. The new school was of only one room perhaps because of a decrease in the African American population in and near the village. At one time some children walked as much as approximately three miles to the Uniontown Village school. Addie Jackson Bolen (AJB), born 1903, attested to this in a 2003 interview with the author (JG) regarding attending the 1914-1915 term.

JG: Were you going to school or did you stop going to school?  
AJB: I walked from there, from over where the new shopping center [Staunton Plaza] is. Come down Frontier Drive – you know where that road is? And my aunt live a little further up, and there was Rosie – that's Charlie Parr's – I mean, Herbert's aunt through marriage. And we would get together, George and I – that was my cousin – and then walk from there over to Uniontown. AJB T-3

Originally for the two room school, as in 1914, there were two teachers. For the 1914-1915 term there was a male teacher who taught the older students and a female teacher who taught the



*By the mid-twentieth century the Uniontown schoolhouse had become a private residence.*



younger ones. Addie Jackson Bolen recalled her teacher's name as Mr. Rose. This was good memory over the many years for his actual name of Mr. Rhodes. The female teacher's last name was Payne. In the 1919-1920 school term in the new one room building, there was one female teacher. Alice Jackson was the teacher. During that term forty children were enrolled for grades one through six.

Another major landmark of Section IV shared with Section I was the Bridge. The Bridge was constructed 0.2 miles from Waynesboro Pike. This was a significant feat since it offered an alternative route from the south to New Hope and vicinity. The Bridge also provided a thoroughfare to the school house for children coming from the south. The Bridge and railroad track underneath marked the southern border of Section IV.

The roadway south before the Bridge curved past the school house lot to the left toward New Hope on an edge of the village that was generally considered a part of it though just beyond the eastern city limits border of Section IV. Bennie Stewart Woodward (BSW), born in 1911, talked in interview with the author (JG) in 2002 about one of the African American households, the Jewett Jackson farm. Bennie Stewart Woodward lived as close as 200 feet to the school house but not far from the Jackson farm.

BSW: (background noise) riding the horse. Yeah, I loved riding horseback. We used to ride – I couldn't tell you what – he lived down near the Western State [mental hospital]. That's where his house was (.....) on a little farm of their own.

JG: This is a black man?

BSW: Yeah, they were black. And she had two or three daughters. Merle Lizzie was the youngest though, she was our age. And we would go down and work in the garden. And Mr. Jewett Jackson would pay us to come down and help to work in the garden.

JG: How much would he pay you?

BSW: Yeah, I think it was twenty-five or fifty cents

JG: But you could do a lot with fifty cents, couldn't you?

BSW: Um-hum. Everything was cheap. You could get a loaf of bread for five cents. And now a loaf of bread costs what? Two or three dollars. BSW: T-9-10

One old Uniontown feature not to be overlooked in Section IV is just north of northeast Anthony Street near the curve by the former school house. Here is the location of the village cemetery, not to be confused with the National Cemetery to the south. A church and



cemetery apparently existed together before the church's demise around 1914. The cemetery, called the Union Church Cemetery, still exists but is difficult to access.

There is much overgrowth and the cemetery has not been used for an interment since the 1940s. A bank book deposit slip attests to its last use in mid-century. Nearby the Union Church Cemetery would have been the location of the Union Church. The church existed till at least 1911, according to trustee board minutes.



*The village cemetery as it existed in the winter of 1995.*

In recounting the boundaries of Section IV, they are drawn from the south at the C&O Railroad, from the west along the Crawford Crossing lane, from the north, the back alley (Anthony Street) and north city limits with the village cemetery, the quarry and former State Lime Plant behind and extending eastward. Anthony Street curves southward and joins Cemetery Road, so called because of the prominent National Cemetery, and renamed in recent history National Avenue. The nearby parallel 1948 city limits is the eastern boundary. As previously mentioned, peripheral households, such as those listed in the 1920 Census on New Hope Road, had a close affiliation with the Uniontown Village, as was the case of the Jewett Jackson farm family.

The 1920 Census yielded data that help determine the number of households in the old Uniontown Village. Home owner status was fifty-two percent.<sup>13</sup> This percentage was much higher than other reports of twenty percent for a 1910 peak in ownership for African Americans. The value of property ownership seems to have been firmly established



in the village. In the 1920 Census only six people were found to be unemployed. That seemed so because of old age and/or ailing health. The work ethic appeared well established in old Uniontown. Since 1920 the progeny of the Uniontown residents have moved onward, some far away into other geographical locations, and have embraced diverse educational and vocational pursuits. Only a few of the decedents of the old Uniontown Village remain. Many life successes have been experienced by decedents who proudly hail their village heritage.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>This paper was funded with a 2005 grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy through the African-American Heritage Festival Foundation, Inc.

<sup>2</sup>Nutt, Joe. *Historical Sketches of African-American Churches of Augusta County, Staunton, Waynesboro and Vicinity*. Staunton, VA: Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy VIA Community Involvement Awareness, Inc. 2001.

<sup>3</sup>Wisely, J.R. Transcript of Audio-Taped Interview during tour of Rockydale Quarry Area. Staunton, VA: Uniontown History Project June 23, 2005.

<sup>4</sup>Gaines, Julius W. Jr., *Old Uniontown - Glances Backwards: Commentary and Oral History Through 1920*. Berkeley, CA: Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy through the African-American Heritage Festival Foundation, Inc. 2007.

<sup>5</sup>Correspondence from Leach, Sara, Senior Historian, National Cemetery Administration. Washington, D.C. Regarding Staunton, National Cemetery via Smith, Terrie, Director Culpeper National Cemetery December 15, 2005.

<sup>6</sup>Deed for Lot 18, Staunton, VA: Clerk of Circuit Court of the City of Staunton. Deedbook 212 p 524. 1977

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>10</sup>Interview with Thompson, Park, Bridge Engineer, Staunton, VA: Virginia Department of Transportation. October 14, 2005.

<sup>11</sup>Term Reports and other records of Augusta County Public Schools. Fishersville, VA: Augusta County Superintendent of Schools office 1883-1920.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 1883-1884 term report.

<sup>13</sup>Hartsough, Carolyn, Analysis and Charting 1920 Census Data, Enumeration District 31, Beverly Manor District of Augusta County, Virginia. Oakland, CA: Prevention Through Creativity Files. 2002.





# Book Reviews

*[Editor's Note: We are pleased to introduce a new book review section to the **Augusta Historical Bulletin**. We will review books pertaining to local history, Virginia history in general, and on topics of obvious local interest including the life and administration of President Woodrow Wilson. We strongly encourage our readers to submit reviews of books that cover these and related topics. Please send any reviews or questions about reviews to the AHB's Book Review Editor, Daniel Métraux at [dmetraux@mbc.edu](mailto:dmetraux@mbc.edu) or Dept. of Asian Studies, Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, VA 24401. The deadline for all reviews is October 1, 2008.] All of the following reviews are by Daniel A. Métraux:*

**Godfrey Hodgson, *Woodrow Wilson's Right-Hand Man: The Life of Edward M. House*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006. XIV + 335 pp. \$35 ISBN: 0-30009-269-5**

Over the years when visiting the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library in Staunton, I have often seen photographs of President Wilson together with his key advisor, Col. Edward M. House (1858-1938). House is always identified as Wilson's close friend and advisor and his name always comes up in discussions of the 1919 Versailles Peace Conference where he was one of the chief negotiators for the United States. But even though I am a careful student of twentieth-century history, I knew virtually nothing about Col. House until reading Godfrey Hodgson's excellent detailed biography.

Hodgson, an associate fellow at the Rothermere American Institute at Oxford University and author of earlier biographies of Henry L. Stimson and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, gives us only a cursory glimpse of House's early life in Texas, choosing to focus almost entirely on House's work with Wilson between 1912-1919. One finishes this book with the very clear impression that Col. House (the title of Colonel is honorific) wielded immense power for Wilson not only in the conduct of American foreign policy, but also in the day-to-day management of Wilson's affairs in the White House. When Wilson, abetted by his wife Edith, broke with House in 1919 at Versailles, the Wilson presidency received a severe blow that, together with the President's illness, terminated Wilson's effectiveness as a leader.



House was born to a wealthy Texas landholding family, but was educated in England and at the Verulam Academy east of Staunton, Virginia. He attended Cornell University from 1877 to 1879 when he returned to Texas at his father's death. He ran various family businesses, farmland and ranch, and eventually went into banking and was very successful in every endeavor, soon becoming one of the wealthiest men in Texas. A moderate conservative at heart, his true devotion was to politics and to the Democratic Party. House built strong friendships and relationships with other powerful men in the Democratic Party and by the early 1890s he had become a very potent powerbroker in state politics and was already famous for his political management skills. House never in his life had any ambitions to assume political office (although he did imagine himself powerful enough to run for President), but if one wanted to advance in Texas politics, House was the man to see. He stage-managed the successful candidacy of Governor James Hogg in 1892 and was the kingmaker for several other Texas governors for the next fourteen years. By the early 1900s, now even more wealthy because of the success of his business interests and becoming somewhat bored with the parochial nature of Texas politics, he and his devoted wife moved to New York and bought a summer home north of Boston.

When Woodrow Wilson was seeking powerful Democratic Party connections in his quest for the presidency in 1912, he met with House and immediately took him on as an advisor to his campaign. House helped Wilson build a strong campaign organization and, most importantly, got his old friend and neighbor, William Jennings Bryan, a figure with immense power in the party, to endorse Wilson. When Wilson won, he turned to House to manage the formation of a powerful and politically balanced group of cabinet and sub-cabinet members. As Hodgson notes, by the time of Wilson's election, House was "the man to see," the most influential counselor of the new President of the United States.

House was offered the cabinet position of his own, but declined, choosing instead "to serve wherever and whenever possible." House was even provided living quarters within the White House. Wilson had been an academic all his life and thus became quite dependent on the organizational and management skills of House who wielded immense power in the overall structure, organization and management of the administration. House, who had already traveled exten-





sively through Europe, made numerous trips through Europe on behalf of Wilson, cultivating deep personal relationships with major European leaders such as Sir Edward Grey, British Foreign Secretary, and later with President Clemenceau of France. He soon became Wilson's most trusted and successful diplomat.

Hodgson goes into great detail over House's attempts to prevent and then stop World War I and then the incredible role that he had in developing Wilson's foreign policy, including the formulation of Wilson's "Fourteen Points" which became the basis of Wilson's peace plan to end the war. Wilson and House envisioned an assertive American foreign policy that would create a new world order based on democratic nations and a robust League of Nations that would mediate and settle international disputes. Hodgson presents fascinating details about the combined efforts before and during the Versailles Conference, generally praising House's efforts, but also pointing out how badly Wilson and House misunderstood the true nature of the Russian Revolution.

Wilson's break with House came when the President returned to France in 1919 after a brief return to the United States during the peace conference. Hodgson presents many ideals that Wilson wanted to implant in the treaty, but notes that House in Wilson's absence had made a number of "compromises" with other European diplomats to facilitate the negotiation process. Wilson, whom Hodgson notes was not above making dubious compromises on his own, was irritated with House and in time terminated their relationship. Their break was abetted by Edith Wilson, who hated House and the hold he had on her husband.

House's influence ceased with his break with Wilson, but for the next twenty years he remained active in Democratic party politics. He even cultivated a close friendship with Franklin Roosevelt, who utilized House as an important advisor up to the time of House's death in 1938 shortly before his eightieth birthday.

Concluding his work, Hodgson notes:

In Colonel House's brief prominence on the international stage, we can see the United States moving, half consciously, half in blind unknowing, to fulfill the destiny Theodore Roosevelt and his friends had foreseen it must occupy. House and Wilson both meant the United States to be the greatest power of the twentieth century, through the weight not only of economic and military power, but also of moral and ideological influence.



Edward House sensed this change, though he did not claim to understand it. He saw that the Old World was hurtling toward the disaster of war. He sensed that America could offer a political vision, and the political skills, to prevent that catastrophe and, once it had started, to end it. For his five most creative years, from 1914 to 1919, he devoted himself to trying to prevent the war, then to stop it, to win it, and at last to turn its hideous sacrifice to lasting gain by creating a new international system....House shared Wilson's beliefs enough to have played a large part in formulating Wilson's two most characteristic achievements, the Fourteen Points and the Covenant of the League of Nations, though others contributed greatly. Where House differed from Wilson was not in the fundamental ideas about political philosophy but in his instinctive talent for political action. Unlike Wilson, House saw how things could be done—by patient persuasion, using other people's hopes, fears and ambitions to forward his own and Wilson's ideas. (275)

Hodgson has composed a brilliant biography of Col. House, but it is much more than that. We also get an inside look at the Wilson White House, with its many successes and failures. This is a fascinating study, very carefully researched and beautifully written. Hodgson introduces a twenty-first century audience to the pair of men who played such a critical role in establishing the twentieth century world order almost a century ago. There are also many fine biographies of Wilson in print, but unless we understand the role of Col. House in the Wilson administration, we are not getting the whole picture. This is primarily a political biography that addresses both Wilson and House in a clear objective and often critical manner, but we also get to know House as a real human being, which is important as well.

**Joe Nutt, *Historic Houses of Augusta County, Virginia: Pen & Ink Drawings of Fifty-Two Houses with Historical Narratives*. Waynesboro Va.: The Humphries Press, Inc., 2007.**

When living in the present, we are often unconscious of the deep historical roots that surround us. The truth is that we continually live with the past while we simultaneously shape the future. That realization hit me square in the face one day when I was going fishing by the Middle River along Middle River Road. I came across a quaint stone house flanked by a historical sign telling me that I was looking at "Mount Pleasant" and that a house first stood on the property in 1761. First settled when Augusta County was at the edge of the wilderness, the farm was



already prospering in the summer of 1781 when Patrick Henry, fleeing British dragoons who were said to be heading to Staunton, is said to have gone to Mount Pleasant, probably with other members of the Virginia Assembly, to visit with its owner, George Moffett. I often look across the cornfields from the river with the thought that somebody standing there nearly 250 years ago would have had the same view.

Mt. Pleasant has had a relatively peaceful history, but such is not the case with the Crawford Place in Churchville, first settled by two brothers, Alexander and Patrick Crawford. At the height of Indian Summer in October of 1764, rumors of a possible raid by Shawnee were rife in Augusta County. Settlers in Churchville, Swoope and Westview sought refuge in a stone house, known as Fort Keller, two miles south of Churchville. Alexander returned to his homestead with his wife Mary to get some supplies for the others at Fort Keller, but they never made it back. Two of their sons, out on patrol, spotted flames coming from their home and rushed there only to find the mutilated bodies of their parents. The Indians escaped westward, but George Moffett from Mount Pleasant and other members of the local militia finally caught up with the Indians and killed many of them. History has united these two houses and their inhabitants in curious ways.

These two houses join fifty others in local historian and artist Joe Nutt's new book, *Historic Houses of Augusta County, Virginia*. Each house has its own detailed full-page sketch by Joe Nutt as well as a detailed history of the house, all of which date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Reading the histories of each of these houses collectively is one of the best ways to get a feel for our region's long and fascinating history which includes periods of peace interspersed with years of war, notably the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. Nutt's engaging writing style brings history to life.

I have used Nutt's book to explore the region making full use of a handy map at the front of the book to guide me. One of my great surprises is the large number of sumptuous historic homes in the Middlebrook area, all of which get detailed historical write-ups in Nutt's book. No local history collection could possibly be complete without Nutt's useful and beautifully crafted book that serves both as an incredibly useful guide and a record of the region's history.



**Elizabeth Brown Pryor, *Reading the Man: A portrait of Robert E. Lee through his Private Letters*. New York: Viking, 2007. 658 pp. \$29.95 ISBN: 978-0-670-03829-9**

A decade ago I took a scholar friend from Australia to the Lee Chapel at Washington & Lee to see Edward Valentine's recumbent statue of Robert E. Lee.

My friend was horrified that a "defeated general and white supremacist who had abandoned the uniform that we had sworn to defend and who then led an armed rebellion against that government that had taken many hundreds of thousands of lives" would be so honored. When I took him to my children's Robert E. Lee High School in Staunton, he gulped when entering the front door and encountering the prominent portraits of Lee and Jackson. "Why not add portraits of Generals Sheridan and Sherman?" he quipped, "for it was they who finally brought peace to the region!"

I must admit some degree of sympathy with my friend's concerns. Brought up in Greenwich Village in New York only two blocks away from Sheridan Square, I passed his venerable statue several times a day for well over a decade. Later while a graduate student at Columbia my wife and I lived near Grant's Tomb. Nothing prepared me for the Lee veneration that we encountered when moving to Staunton in 1983. I longed for the day when I would have the opportunity to read a full objective biography of Lee and I finally got the opportunity in 2007 with the publication of Elizabeth Brown Pryor's mammoth *Reading the Man: A Portrait of Robert E. Lee Through His Private Letters*. Pryor, an award-winning historian, noted biographer of Clara Barton and a senior American diplomat, has produced a highly complex biography often punctuated with many of the existent letters to and from Lee that allow Lee and his correspondents speak for themselves.

Pryor has produced an engaging and critical biography of a highly complex man. She defines greatness in a person as someone whose contributions have a lasting impact on other people for generations to come. Pryor admires Lee's battlefield bravery and successful military campaigns in Virginia, but she is quite critical of his two invasions of the North that led to disastrous battles at Antietam in 1862 and Gettysburg in 1863, both of which resulted in massive Confederate casualties and contributed a lot to the South's ultimate defeat. She exposes numerous other



errors of judgment by Lee on the battlefield, confirming observations made by General Grant that Lee was by no means a skilled field general. On the other hand, Lee's conduct at Appomattox, his decision not to authorize guerilla warfare, but rather reconciliation with the North, contributed mightily to the restoration of the Union after four bitter years of war. Lee's greatness, according to Pryor, came in defeat and not on the battlefield.

Pryor also debunks the mythology surrounding Lee by exposing his views and actions on slavery and race. She reveals Lee to be a harsh white supremacist and cruel slave master. In one chapter, "Theory Meets Reality," she quotes the postwar testament of Wesley Norris. Norris had been a slave of George Washington Parke Custis who had promised to free his slaves upon his death, which came in 1857, but Lee, the executor of his father-in-law's estate, refused to honor this commitment until 1863. Norris, his young sister Mary, and another young female cousin escaped and were heading north through Maryland when they were recaptured and brought back to Lee in Arlington. Lee told the three that he would teach them a lesson that they would never forget. He ordered them taken to the barn, all stripped to the waist, and tied to posts. He then stood by and watched them severely whipped fifty times on the back after which he sadistically ordered their bloodied backs washed with brine, only increasing their incredible pain. Later they were sent to hard labor posts elsewhere in Virginia. Lee was severely criticized by the northern press for these actions.

Lee saw slaves as property whose duty was to work where and when needed by their master. He cared little for the family relations of his slaves, often splitting up families at a whim by sending members to work on scattered plantations across Virginia and on labor details. Pryor writes: "Unfortunately Lee was notoriously poor at what we would today call 'cross-cultural communication.' He did not identify with those outside his class and race, did not like to be familiar with them, and really did not take their side in issues of social justice. He had not been successful, for example, in his attempts to interact with the Comanche on the Texas plains. Lee's similar failure with the Custis slaves was to have dire results." (266)

But Lee's conduct differed little from those of other slave masters. "Slaves were things: they had no rights under the law. The master



determined the kind and amount of their labor, what they ate and wore, where they went, what they possessed, how they conducted themselves in public, whether or not they were to remain with their families...Whipping slaves was not an offense; indeed, it was prescribed in Virginia and Maryland from straying outside the plantation limits to keeping a dog, even for 'beating up' the river to attract fish."(273) Needless to say, Lee's slaves hated him.

We see the whole scope of Lee's career here—from his brilliant success as a cadet at West Point where he was a tiny fraction of a point of graduating at the top of his class to his talent as an engineer who excelled in logistics and topography. He spent many lonely years in honorable service for his country in places like Savannah, New York, St. Louis, and Texas, where he developed a deep hatred for Indians. We see him missing his family, especially during his exemplary service during the Mexican War. But when it came to the challenge of Civil War, we find him morally opposed to secession, but we also see him as a deep Southern / Confederate nationalist who was distressed and radicalized by the Union seizure and destruction of much of his family's property. Pryor also shows that Lee's public restorationist spirit, which was very real, did not match his very private bitter feelings about defeat.

Pryor concludes by noting:

In time many of the myths would become self-perpetuating, repeated so often that they became common knowledge, difficult to overturn from the sheer certitude of their acceptance. The disturbing point about this is not that Lee was portrayed in such an idealized light, but that so much was lost as man was turned into monument. He needed no publicists; they only diminished him, reducing a complex person to a stone icon. By denying Lee's common follies and foibles, his devotees removed him from us, setting him apart, so that his true ability to inspire was obscured. The truth is, Lee lived an all too human existence, fraught with dilemmas and decisions that would challenge the sturdiest soul. He handled some of those situations well, others with disastrous error. Never did he turn away, however, and even his sharpest critics never questioned his steadfastness. This is where our sympathy with him lies; here and in the heart-rending way that he strove, but failed, to achieve his dreams—number two at West Point by fractions of a point; perennially disrupted in the home life he coveted; denied professional recognition until he stood at the very brink of national disaster; defeated when he felt the capacity for victory. Through all this he was brave and tenacious, and set no limits on what he would give or try to accomplish. Yet Lee, who could be as self-serving as any of us, was not intrinsically more virtuous than others. He simply har-





nessed his fine points—notably persistence and self-control—to overcome failings within and around him. The greatest honor we can give Lee is to admire him for who he actually was, rather than as an imaginary creature, which only insults him by implying that the reality was inadequate. (470-71)

There is too much written about Lee to say that any one work is the most definitive, but Pryor's work certainly should top or nearly top any list. It is an honest, objective, fair, and brilliantly researched study of a highly complex and very important man. The inclusion of so many letters, some of them only discovered by the author as late as 2002, lets Lee and his contemporaries speak for themselves. He deserved to be loved and to be hated, to inspire and to repel, but like Lincoln, he had a commanding presence that deserves our attention if not respect. I think we come closest to finding the real Lee in Pryor's magnificent book.

**James L. Huston, *Stephen A. Douglas and the Dilemmas of Democratic Equality*. Lanham, Boulder and New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007. Xii + 221 pp. ISBN: 0-7425-3456-1**

The 7 September 1860 issue of the Staunton *Vindicator* proclaimed the great news: "Judge Douglas in Staunton! Grand Reception! The Masses in Motion!! One Hundred Guns Fired!!" A huge crowd of between 2,500 and 3,500 crowded around the Staunton courthouse to hear a campaign speech by Stephen A. Douglas (1813-1861), Democratic Senator from Illinois and a major candidate for President. Douglas spoke lustily on his major campaign theme, "Popular Sovereignty," the idea that American territories when organizing their governments and writing their constitutions could determine for themselves whether they wished to allow or forbid slavery within their borders. Douglas' position varied from the Republican Party platform espoused by Lincoln, which would forbid the expansion of slavery beyond its current borders.

While addressing the people of Staunton, he started off with an amusing tale why Illinois was called the "sucker state." According to author James L. Huston:

Douglas gave a humorous explanation of the origins of the label when he stumped Virginia in 1860. In his version, George Rogers Clark during the American Revolution marched to Illinois to com-



bat the French at the town of Kaskaskia. It was a hot day and the Frenchmen were "sitting quietly on a little verandah in front of their houses, sucking their juleps through a straw, and he rushed on them, crying, 'surrender you suckers, you!' [Great Laughter.] The Frenchmen surrendered, and from that day to this, the Illinoisans have been known as 'suckers.' [Renewed laughter.]"<sup>1</sup>

Having won his crowd, Douglas embraced the main theme of his talk—the need to preserve the Union. Talk of secession was in the air, but Douglas spoke about the glory of the American republic and the hope for freedom and democracy that it offered the world. He urged everybody to uphold the American constitution which gave the federal government powers to make treaties, regulate currency, and the like, but did not give the national government the power to regulate the private property of individuals. "Each man with his property stood in the Territories upon the same ground, entitled to the same protection and subject to the same restrictions as the other. They were both alike to be governed by the local law."<sup>2</sup> In other words, contrary to what the Republicans proclaimed, the federal government itself did not have the right to restrict the spread of slavery.

Huston, Regents Professor of American History at Oklahoma State University, traces Douglas from his birth and boyhood in Vermont to his move to Illinois at age twenty. Douglas had a near fanatical interest in politics and was one of the key operatives who built the Democratic Party in the then fledgling state of Illinois. People turned to him as a leader because he did all of the hard work of politics and because he was a brilliant orator who could entrance a large crowd for hours at a time. Admitted to the bar in his early twenties, Douglas quickly became a judge and then rose in politics from the State Legislature to the U.S. House of Representatives and finally to the U.S. Senate. Philosophically Douglas came of age during the time when egalitarianism became the national creed and President Andrew Jackson stood as its champion. Douglas wrote that "all power of right, rests with the people, and emanates directly from them." He always showed compassion for the down-trodden and ostracized and never really felt at home with polite society, but as was common during this period, equality was for the white European only—Blacks and Indians were second-class citizens without any role in society.

Douglas was one of the early champions of "Manifest Destiny," strongly supporting in the 1840s the annexation of Texas and the



seizure of all Mexican land in what is now California and the American Southwest. But Douglas wanted more—the incorporation of Cuba, the rest of Mexico and even the whole of Canada into a greater American empire. He even went as far as to urge the incorporation of Central America, for the expansion of the American form of government brought with it the blessings of freedom, American democracy and local self-government.

When Manifest Destiny, however, led to the expansion of the country into a truly transatlantic republic with many new territories soon to be filled with territorial governments, a new crisis developed when the South demanded that slavery be allowed into the new lands and the anti-slavery north demanded that it be prohibited. Concerned that his dream of a grand republic might be derailed by this sectional hostility, Douglas concluded that the solution to the problem lay in “popular sovereignty.” The Illinois Senator also helped to father the great “Compromise of 1850” which brought about the admission of California as a free state, created territorial governments for New Mexico and Utah, fixed the borders of Texas, and brought passage of the notorious Fugitive Slave Act.

Despite anger over the Fugitive Slave Act in much of the north, the 1850 Compromise held pretty well until the 1850s when Douglas played a critical role in the passage of the notorious Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. Bloody Kansas and the proposed adoption of the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution as the basis of Kansas statehood outraged the nation and effectively split the Democratic Party into pro- and anti-slavery factions with Douglas and many of his northern colleagues opposing Lecompton.

Huston brilliantly traces the rise of Abraham Lincoln and the Republican Party that insisted that restricting slavery to its present boundaries would produce its eventual death. We get excellent coverage of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, the outrage in the South over the rejection of the Lecompton Constitution, the rise of radicals on both sides, and the failure of middle-of-the-roaders like Douglas to keep the country together. Even Douglas had to take sides in the end when he came out against secession and for the preservation of the Union.

Huston speculates that even after the lower South seceded the nation might have still avoided Civil War. An eerie quiet took hold between January and April 1861 and many in the North apparently



began to accept the new status quo. Lincoln refused to go on the attack and awaited a physical attack by the new Confederacy. The peace ended abruptly with the South's attack on Fort Sumter and Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion.

Douglas felt oddly out of place as the united nation he so cherished moved toward full civil war. Ironically, only six weeks after the fall of Fort Sumter and just days after his last speaking tour, Douglas, who had been in declining health, fell ill and died at the early age of forty-eight.

Huston has produced a short, brilliant, and very readable political study of Douglas and his times. He even goes to great lengths to explain the background of many of the events and ideas that dominated antebellum America. For example, the long chapter on the Compromise of 1850 is preceded by an excellent analysis of the 1820 Missouri Compromise. This good background coverage will make this book especially useful for the lay reader or beginning student of the Civil War era. This biography is in fact one of the best written histories of this tumultuous period. It is also a fine example of brilliant in-depth scholarly research.

But because this is a political history, we learn very little about Douglas as a man. We know he married twice and had two surviving children, but we know nothing else about his family. Only in the very last paragraph of the book do we learn of Douglas' ill health and then, four or five lines later, he is dead. End of story. And there is no concluding section or epilogue where Huston might have reflected more on Douglas' importance in U.S. history.

**Notes:** <sup>1</sup>Huston, 15. Huston quotes from the *Staunton Spectator* of 4 September 1860. <sup>2</sup>*Staunton Vindicator*, 7 September 1860.

**Edward P. Crapol, *John Tyler: The Accidental President*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006. 344 pp. ISBN: 0807830410**

John Tyler (1790-1862), one of this nation's more obscure presidents, is commonly placed at the bottom of lists by many scholars of American history along with Pierce, Fillmore, Buchanan, and Harding. However, Edward P. Crapol, emeritus Professor of American History at the College of William & Mary, has prepared a revisionist biography of Tyler, *John Tyler: The Accidental President*,



where he argues that he was in fact one of the country's stronger presidents who strengthened the executive branch and helped pave the way for the vast expansion of the United States.

John Tyler was born in Charles City County, attended the College of William & Mary, and was admitted to the bar in 1809. One of the rising stars of Virginia politics of the early mid-nineteenth century, Tyler served three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, a term as governor of Virginia (1825-27), and two terms in the U.S. Senate. He retired from national politics in 1836 and became an active local member of the Whig Party when, to his surprise, he was added to the 1840 Whig ticket of William Henry Harrison. When Harrison contracted viral pneumonia soon after his inauguration and died during the fifth week of his presidency, Tyler found himself the nation's chief executive.

One of the most significant aspects of Tyler's presidency is the very idea that he insisted that he was in fact President of the United States. Many contemporary politicians insisted that Tyler was only Acting President, but after taking the oath of office, he received the backing of his cabinet for his claim to be the true President of the country, had resolutions passed in both houses of Congress to that effect, and even gave his own inaugural address. Tyler's deliberate actions set a clear precedent for presidential succession that has remained in place ever since.

Tyler, though elected on a Whig ticket, very quickly displayed his political independence when he began vetoing many Whig-sponsored bills passed by Congress. Leading Whigs like Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky pressed the Whig program of high tariffs to stimulate manufacturing, distributing surplus federal revenue to the states for internal improvements, creating a new national bank, and slowing down the migration of Americans westward by keeping land prices high. Expelled later in 1841 by the Whigs, Tyler became known as the "man without a party." Even his whole cabinet resigned except for Secretary of State Daniel Webster who stayed on long enough to successfully negotiate the 1842 Webster-Ashburton Treaty fixing the border between Canada and Maine, thus ending a major barrier to good relations between the United States and Great Britain.

Professor Crapol argues that the greatest legacy of Tyler's administration was his strong advocacy behind Texas annexation, a feat



that he accomplished in the waning days of his administration in March 1845. Ironically, Tyler sought the annexation not only for the expansion of American power, but also for the expansion of slavery. Tyler, himself a slaveholder, was a strong advocate of the institution. Crapol also contends that Tyler was one of the earliest American leaders who envisioned a continental American empire extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific and perhaps beyond—Tyler strongly advocated American control of Hawaii and the benefits of abundant trade with China.

Tyler lived another seventeen years following the end of his presidency. Professor Crapol documents how Tyler thought about standing for a second term, but with no strong party backing and little support in Congress, his dreams of a new term vanished as a mirage.

But Tyler was not entirely through with politics. Although he retired to his Virginia Walnut Grove plantation (which he renamed “Sherwood Forest” to signify his being “outlawed” by the Whigs), he bestowed advice to state’s rights Democrats and chaired the Virginia Peace Convention in February 1861. He later served in the provisional Confederate Congress in 1861 and was elected to the Confederate House of Representatives in 1862, but died in Richmond before he could take his seat. Tyler’s death was virtually ignored in Washington because of his devotion to the Confederacy.

His home and most of his papers and possessions were destroyed during the Civil War.

The work of any biographer of Tyler is hampered by the loss of many of his papers, but Professor Crapol has nevertheless produced a splendid scholarly work that sheds new light on our tenth president. Crapol wants us to be aware of Tyler’s strength and of his active and successful career as a Virginia politician before 1840, but we also see Tyler’s many faults including his inability to work with or to build a bloc of supporters in Congress and his heartfelt support for the Confederacy at the end of his life. Carefully researched revisionist works are always welcome, especially this one. We learn that Tyler, despite his advocacy of limited government and state’s rights, expanded the broad reach of the executive branch with his advocacy of Texas annexation, a continental empire, and settled relations with Great Britain. In that sense Tyler paved the way for the subsequent administration of President Polk under whose administration the





Tyler dreams of a continental empire were readily realized.

Crapol's short book is clearly written and well documented. It will appeal not only to the scholar of American history, but to the general reader as well.

**Logan Ward, *See you in a hundred years: Four seasons in forgotten America*. Dallas, Texas: BenBella Books, 2007. 245 pp. ISBN: 978-1-933771-15-1**

As an academic historian I often wish that I could enter a simple time machine and travel back to the late 1800s. It would be interesting to see how people actually lived, to know their joys and frustrations, and to appreciate their worldview that assuredly must be different from that which we have in the fast-paced instant-gratification years of the early twenty-first century. Needless to say, I can only visualize the Victorian age in my imagination, but writer Logan Ward, his wife Heather, and their then-baby boy Luther actually in 2001 made the trek back to life in rural Virginia in 1900. They stayed there for a whole year and after their return to the present have written a fascinating book detailing their experience.

The Wards were living the "Yuppie" life in New York: successful, well-educated, holding good jobs and rearing a handsome child. But, Ward writes, "There's something missing from our lives—from our relationship—and yet we are too busy to confront the problem. At least that's our excuse. So the two of us plod through our days hardly talking. And at night we collapse into bed, kept awake by the sound of squeaking bedsprings in the apartment above, but too exhausted for any bed-squeaking ourselves."

Ward thought nostalgically about the "good old days" when America was a more rural nation where life supposedly moved at a slower pace and families spent more time together.

A curious notion overtook the Ward family—what about going back to the life of 1900 to discover what it might be like to live on a farm? In an interview Ward said:

We never wanted to be pioneers or indentured servants or even landed gentry. I wasn't even all that interested in history (which I



admit later in the book). What interested me was self-sufficiency and living without the technological distractions of the modern world. The year 1900 was almost within grasp—both my grandfathers were alive then—and yet it occurred before the dawn of the automobile age, before the advent of mass communications, before electricity. At least in rural America, and the majority of Americans in 1900 were still rural.

The project, Ward reflects near the end of their 1900 year, “isn’t about escape. It’s about exploring those inalienable realities facing humanity since the dawn of time—food, water, nature, community. It’s about finding our place in the continuum of history.”

They bought an old farmhouse in Swoope, Virginia, because years before

Heather and I had both fled the South, fled what we considered its small-mindedness and suffocating traditions. But now we were ready for a change. So here was a chance to reconnect with our southern roots. Heather’s from Alabama, and I’m from South Carolina. We had no desire to return to the Deep South, so we stopped in Virginia, home of Thomas Jefferson, who penned many a passage about the independence and dignity of the small farmer. Of course, the agrarian ideal may have been easier to uphold for a slave owner. But a 1900 dirt farmer who didn’t borrow out the nose for fancy farm machinery (the way those in agribusiness do today) would have been pretty independent.

After finding a farm and settling in, Ward recalled:

Here we are, all the details of our plan nearly in place. In the kitchen is a wood-burning cookstove. A pair of milk goats nibble grass in the barnyard. Half a dozen chickens scratch around a henhouse with southern exposure, exclusive garden access, high ceilings, and the old-world charm of exposed oak and hard-pine timber....Leaning over it is our 100-year-old barn, as big as a high school gym. The outhouse stands atop a freshly dug hole. Soon the well-driller will come to pull the electric pump and install a manual one in its place. . . . After a month of stripping the 21st century out of our lives piece by piece, I am beginning to feel the transformation.

*See You in a Hundred Years* is a fascinating account of their life during this year-long experiment in Swoope. They faithfully grew much of their own food, struggled with a stubborn but loyal draft horse named Belle, planted and harvested their crops, and dealt with a bevy of chickens and goats. They cooked on a woodstove, canned for the winter, traveled to neighbors’ houses in a buggy pulled by Belle, washed their clothes by hand using water from their well. They



built strong friendships with their neighbors who actively cooperated with the Wards in their experiment. Nothing that existed after 1900 intruded into their lives.

It was not an easy experience. Heather and Logan had to teach themselves or get neighboring farmers to instruct them about basic farming techniques and how to attach Belle to the buggy. A prolonged drought almost destroyed their crops, and the news of 9/11 tempted them to get news through the modern media, but they faithfully stuck to their prescribed routines and made it through the year. There are times when their relationship became very strained as they encountered considerable frustration and stress in their struggle to survive. Life on a small farm in 1900 was not for sissies!

Ward provides us with a marvelous portrait of his family's journey back to the past. He is a highly skilled writer who allows us to examine their intricate and intimate relationship that waxed and waned throughout the year. Its also a good story, at times highly romantic, at other times very anxious (will they survive the drought?), and often very amusing. The reader will get a fascinating portrait of life in 1900 with all of its ups and downs. It is a work that will interest anybody who cares about the history of the Shenandoah Valley.



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***Naturalization Records*** compiled by Katharine G. Bushman. Important collection of names of persons naturalized in local courts from the extensive research of a professional genealogical researcher in Augusta County records. \$5 + \$.25 tax

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***Portals to Shenandoah Valley Folkways*** edited by Dorothy A Boyd-Bragg, softcover, illustrated, and fully indexed, 137 pp. Four well-known experts on Shenandoah Valley folkways are featured. Folklorist John L. Heatwole considers aspects of local folklore, including witches and hexing. Local historian Nancy T. Sorrells contributes a view of the role of cattle in valley life, including cattle drives. The importance of crafts, especially pottery and basket making, is the theme Scott H. Suter pursues. Food historian Danielle M. Torisky follows foodways of the Civil War era, including local recipes that were regarded as comfort foods to Valley folk. \$15 + \$.75 tax

***Shirey's Guide Book to Augusta County, Staunton, and Waynesboro, Virginia*** by Paul C. Shirey. Wealth of information about landmarks and everyday life from a resident local historian who recorded his memories about the area. Indexed and arranged in alphabetical order. \$3 + \$.15 tax



*Staunton's Newtown: Portrait of a Historic District*, by Katharine Brown and her students in historic preservation at Mary Baldwin College (330 pg. softcover, more than 250 photos, maps, and drawings), 2006. This book tells the story of the people who made Newtown from its addition to Staunton in 1787 to its recent rediscovery and revival, and the houses, churches, and schools that they built. With seven churches and seven schools featured, the institutional history of the district alone is impressive. Staunton's prominent architectural firm, T.J. Collins & Son, designed many Newtown buildings and structures, including the monuments of Thornrose Cemetery. \$25 + \$1.25 tax

*Staunton/Parkersburg Turnpike* (4 cassettes) Oral interviews with historians and residents about life along the historic Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike from the days of the stagecoach to the automobile. A colorful story told with humor from a variety of viewpoints. \$7.50 each, all for \$30 + \$1.50 tax. (CD-ROM) \$9 each, all for \$36 + \$1.80 tax

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*Wip Robinson, III* by Jones. Biography of beloved Augusta County announcer and radio pioneer. \$3 + \$.15 tax

*William Sheppard* by William Phipps. Carefully researched biography of pioneer African-American Presbyterian minister and missionary to the Congo who was a native of Waynesboro. \$22.95 + \$1.15 tax

*The Word Gatherer: An Oral History of John Heatwole* by Carol Maureen DeHart. Famed woodcarver and folklorist John Heatwole passed away in late 2006. Before his death, he sat down with the author and gave her his own story. They fine tuned and edited the work and had planned to publish it together. DeHart finished the project that includes many never-before seen photos of Heatwole and his art pieces. \$14.95 + \$.75 tax